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Pronunciation and Transliteration Chart

Arabic script	Pronunciation	Transliterated as:
أ	short ‘a’, as in *cat*	a
آ – ى	longer ‘a’, as in *cab* (not as in *cake*)	â
ب	/b/ as in *bell*, *rubber* and *tab*	b
ت	/t/ as in *tap, mustard* and *sit*	t
ة	takes the sound of the preceding diactrical mark sometimes ending in h (when in pausal form): ah, ih, or ooh; or atu(n), ati(n) or ata(n) when in uninterrupted speech	h or t (when followed by another Arabic word)
ث	/th/ as in *thing*, *maths* and *wealth*	th
ج	/j/ as in *jam*, *ajar* and *age*	j
ح	a ‘harsher’ sound than the English initial /h/, and may occur medially and in word-final position as well	ḥ
خ	as in *Bach* (in German); may occur initially and medially as well	kh
د	/d/ as in *do*, *muddy* and *red*	d
ذ	as in *this*, *father*, and *with*	dh
ر	/r/ as in *raw*, *art* and *war*; may also be a rolled r, as with Spanish words	r

Arabic script	**Pronunciation**	**Transliterated as:**
ز	/z/ as in *zoo*, *easy* and *gaze*	z
س	/s/ as in *so*, *messy* and *grass*	s
ش	as in *ship*, *ashes* and *rush*	sh
ص	no close equivalent in English, but may be approximated by pronouncing it as /sw/ or /s/ farther back in the mouth	ṣ
ض	no close equivalent in English, but may be approximated by pronouncing /d/ farther back in the mouth	ḍ
ط	no close equivalent in English, but may be approximated by pronouncing /t/ farther back in the mouth	ṭ
ظ	no close equivalent in English, but may be approximated by pronouncing 'the' farther back in the mouth	dh
ع	no close equivalent in English: a guttural sound in the back of the throat	‘
غ	no close equivalent in English, but may be closely approximated by pronouncing it like the French /r/ in 'rouge'	gh
ف	/f/ as in *fill*, *effort* and *muff*	f

Arabic script	**Pronunciation**	**Transliterated as:**
ق	no close equivalent in English, but may be approximated by pronouncing /k/ farther back in the mouth	q
ك	/k/ as in *king*, *buckle* and *tack*	k
ل	/l/ as in *lap*, *halo*; in the word *Allah*, it becomes velarized as in *ball*	l
م	/m/ as in *men*, *simple* and *ram*	m
ن	/n/ as in *net*, *ant* and *can*	n
هـ - ه - ـه	/h/ as in hat; unlike /h/ in English, in Arabic /h/ is pronounced in medial and word-final positions as well	h
و	as in *wet* and *away*	w
و (as a vowel)	long u, as in *boot* and *too*	oo
ي	as in *yet* and *yard*	y
ي (as a vowel)	long e, as in *eat*, *beef* and *see*	ee
ء	glottal stop: may be closely approximated by pronouncing it like 't' in the Cockney English pronunciation of *butter*: *bu'er*, or the stop sound in *uh — oh!*	' (Omitted in initial position)

Diphthongs:

Arabic script	Pronunciation	Transliterated as:
أوَ ، و	Long o, as in *owe*, *boat* and *go*	au, aw, ow
أي ، يَ	Long 'a', as in *able*, *rain* and *say*	ay, ai, ei

Diacritical marks (*tashkeel*):

Name of mark	Pronunciation	Transliterated as:
ـَ fatḥah	very short 'a' or schwa (unstressed vowel)	a
ـِ kasrah	shorter version of ee or schwa (unstressed vowel)	i
ـُ Dammah	shorter version of oo	u
ـّ shaddah	a doubled consonant is stressed in the word, and the length of the sound is also doubled	Double letter
ـْ sukoon	no vowel sound between consonants or at the end of a word	Absence of vowel

Arabic honorific symbols used in this book

(ﷻ): *Subḥânahu wa ta'âlâ* — 'The Exalted'

(ﷺ): *Ṣalla-Allâhu 'alayhi wa sallam* — 'Blessings and peace be upon him'

(ﷺ): *'Alayhis-salâm* — 'Peace be upon him'

(رضي الله عنه): *Raḍiya Allâhu 'anhu* — 'May Allah be pleased with him'

(رضي الله عنها): *Raḍiya Allâhu 'anhâ* — 'May Allah be pleased with her'

About the word 'Lord'

The word *lord* in English has several related meanings. The original meaning is 'master' or 'ruler', and in this sense it is often used to refer to human beings: 'the lord of the mansion' or 'Lord So-and-So' (in the United Kingdom, for example). The word *Lord* with a capital L is used in the lexicon of Islam to refer to the One and Only God — Allah. In Islam, there is no ambiguity about the meaning of this word. While it is true that one may occasionally use the word *lord* (whether capitalized or not) to refer to a human being, in Islamic discourse the reference of this term is always clear from the context. Whereas for Christians, Hindus and other polytheists, the word *Lord* with a capital 'L' may refer to Allah, to Jesus or to some imagined deity, for Muslims, there can be no plurality of meaning. Allah alone is the Lord, and the Lord is Allah — not Jesus, not Rama, not any other being.

The Editor

When ‘jihad’ refers to fighting

Although jihad is often translated into English as ‘holy war’, it must be noted that war has never been described as ‘holy’ in any of Islam’s primary texts or even early Islamic literature. Linguistically speaking, jihad is an Islamic term that applies to a broad spectrum of activities, ranging from daily striving to meet the day’s challenges, to the striving against one’s desires and self, to the struggle to provide for one’s family. Its basic definition is ‘the act of striving or struggling in the way of Allah’. Therefore, jihad is not limited to war; it includes struggling with one’s soul, speech, body and wealth so that the message of Allah (*Subḥânahu wa Ta‘âlâ* — Glorified and Exalted is He) reaches all humans willing to receive it.

Islamic scholars have referred to different types of jihad, such as jihad against the self (to understand Islam, act upon it, call others to it and be patient with the difficulties of making this call), jihad against the Devil (repelling Satanic whispers, doubts and lusts), jihad against the tongue (controlling it, using it to enjoin what is good, forbid what is wrong, spread the correct teachings of Islam and answer false ideologies), jihad against aggression (with the purpose of protecting Islam and the lives, honour and property of Muslims) and other types of jihad like jihad against the hypocrites, jihad against oppressors and jihad against mischief makers.

Jihad — in the context of fighting — has specific rules and conditions that need to be met before jihad is initiated. The first rule is that people are not to be fought because of what they believe, or to coerce them to accept Islam. The second rule is to ‘fight only those

who fight you' and never initiate unprovoked aggression *(Qur'an 2: 190)*. That means that Muslims are only allowed to fight back, rather than initiating fighting; but 'fighting back' includes fighting against actual aggression as well as proactively addressing real threats of aggression. In both cases, Muslims are instructed to be prepared and ready to defend their nation before they actually engage in military conflict. There are additional conditions, but the above-mentioned conditions are vital for putting jihad in its broader meaning in the proper context.

Another condition of the sort of jihad which involves fighting is that it should take place only under an Islamic authority that 'raises the banner' for such jihad. It is not following the Sunnah at all for any individual or self-appointed group of Muslims to wage war on behalf of a nation. Instead, Muslims should be united under the single authority of an imam or khaleefah (caliph), except in the case where an individual needs to defend his own family and property, or to help his neighbour to do so. This is proved by the example of the early Muslims as well as texts in the Qur'an and the Sunnah:

﴿When there comes to them [the hypocrites] a matter related to [public] safety or fear, they spread it about; if only they had referred it to the Messenger and to such of them as are in authority, those among them who are able to think through the matter would have understood it.﴾ *(Qur'an 4: 83)*

«Ḥudhayfah ibn Yaman asked the Prophet (*ṣalla Allâhu 'alayhi wa sallam* — blessings and peace be upon him): What if (the Muslims) have no single leader (they are divided into disputing groups)? The Prophet (ﷺ) answered: If they have no single leader or unified group, then leave all these disputing groups, even if you have to bite on a tree until your death.» (part of a longer hadith recorded by Bukhari)

There are other conditions for jihad. In general, the rules laid out for war in Islam should be upheld unless there is some legitimate

need or strategy when fighting occurs that would necessitate going against those rules. A Muslim should not kill himself or herself *(Qur'an 4: 29)* nor kill another Muslim, except by accident *(Qur'an 4: 92)*. Women, children, the elderly and other non-combatants should not be harmed. Land should not be destroyed, nor trees cut down. Corpses should not be mutilated. Islam should not be imposed upon non-believers. Rather, if combatant non-Muslims choose on their own to embrace Islam, even if only as a deceitful trick, it should be accepted by the Muslim leadership, and fighting should stop. Peace should be sought before lives are lost. Treaties and agreements should be upheld. Prisoners should be well-treated. Above all, justice must be done.

﴿Fight in the path [according to the rules set by Allah] of Allah only those who fight you, but do not commit aggression [transgress limits]. Allah does not love aggressors....And fight them until persecution is no more, and religion is [freely embraced] for [the individual's faith in] Allah. But if they desist, then let there be no aggression except against transgressors.﴾ *(Qur'an 2: 190, 193)*

﴿Allah does not forbid you from being good, kind, just, and fair to those who have not fought you because of religion nor driven you from your homeland. Allah loves those who are just. Allah forbids you from giving allegiance to those who have fought you because of religion and have driven you from your homeland, and those who supported your expulsion...﴾ *(Qur'an 60: 8-9)*

In addition, the Muslim nation is encouraged to maintain strong military capabilities to promote justice and to deter acts of war and aggression.

﴿And make ready for them [their potential aggression] all you can of power, including steeds of war, to deter the enemy of Allah and your enemy, and others besides, whom you may not know but whom Allah knows.﴾ *(Qur'an 8: 60)*

The Editor

Publisher's Note

All praise and thanks belong to Allah alone, the One, the Almighty and All-Merciful. Blessings and peace be upon Prophet Muhammad, the last of His Messengers and Prophets, and upon his family, his Companions and all those who follow in his footsteps until the end of time.

As human beings, we are naturally interested in finding out who we are, what our nature is, and how we can improve ourselves to attain a healthy mental state leading to peace of mind.

As Muslims, we find answers to these questions in the Qur'an and in the example of the Prophet Muhammad. Psychologists have also attempted to answer these questions, but despite a great deal of useful research and hundreds of theories, they have been unable to propose a theory that is entirely satisfactory. This is because of the basic assumption of secularism that underlies most of their work.

In this book, Dr. Aisha Utz merges valuable information from Islamic teachings and modern psychological theories. We think that it will be of interest to Muslims looking for an integrated theory of psychology that does not conflict with their religious beliefs, as well as to non-Muslims who wish to understand how Muslims are influenced and supported by their religious beliefs.

May Allah accept the efforts of all those who contributed to the production of this book, and may it be acceptable to Him, *âmeen.*

Muhammad ibn 'Abdul Mohsin Al-Tuwaijri

Managing Director
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Riyadh, Saudi Arabia

Preface

In the name of Allah (ﷻ), the Entirely and Exceptionally Merciful.

All praise be to Allah. We praise Him and seek His help; we seek His forgiveness and His guidance. We seek refuge in Allah from the evil of our souls and our evil deeds. Whomever Allah guides, no one can lead astray, and whomever He allows to go astray, no one can guide. I bear witness that there is no god except Allah, and that He has no partner. I also bear witness that Muhammad (ﷺ) is His servant and Messenger.

As an undergraduate student of psychology and then as a graduate student, specializing in clinical psychology in secular universities in the United States, I struggled to find a psychological theory that accurately and comprehensively explained human nature. Although I studied more than 250 theories offered by secular psychology, not even one was able to provide me with an accurate understanding of the human nature. Some theories seemed more attractive than others, but there was always something missing, or the pieces did not seem to fit together quite right.

Upon completing my doctorate degree, I began a search to determine what Islam had to say about the topic. (I had already been Muslim for several years). The search was rather difficult at first, as it was necessary to sift through the misguidance of Sufism and various other philosophical approaches in Islamic psychology. By the grace of Allah, I came across some authentic sources in English; as I read more and more, the light began to shine, and the truth became apparent. I was completely amazed at how the Islamic approach seemed so uncomplicated. I felt relieved to have finally found the theory that I had been searching for.

Islam offers a clear, straightforward, and comprehensive view of what it means to be human. It encompasses our purpose in life, our

inherently spiritual nature, the importance of our relationship with Allah, our priorities in life, and so forth. Islam also details the steps that we need to take to purify our souls, protect ourselves from Satan, and achieve the highest level in this world and the hereafter. These are goals that every human being is capable of achieving. The struggle is not easy, but the goals are certainly attainable.

What a breath of fresh air it is to know that we are not merely victims of our genes, past experiences, or present environment. We can make the choice to fulfil our purpose in life regardless of these variables (although there will be a few exceptions). That choice entails the sincere submission to Allah, our Creator and Sustainer, through the guidance that He has provided for us. In fact, this is the only path to true peace and happiness in this life and the hereafter. Obedience to Allah is the only sanctuary and deterrent in this life from trials and tribulations, mental distress, and our own lowly desires.

I am enthused by research coming out of Western institutions that had proclaimed their secular theories for so long. Research is now pointing to the relevance of religiosity and spirituality in the lives of individuals and to the influence this has on the mental and physical health of its adherents. As more scientists have become interested in the topic, the evidence has been mounting. Religiosity/spirituality has emerged as an extremely beneficial factor in preventing, managing and recovering from emotional, psychological and physical illnesses. This research, in reality, points to the truth of Islam. Allah (ﷻ) mentions:

﴿We will show them Our signs in the horizons and within themselves until it becomes clear to them that it is the truth. But is it not sufficient concerning your Lord that He is, over all things, a Witness?﴾[1]

(Qur'an 41: 53)

[1] The translations of the meanings of the Qur'an are adapted from: Sahih International, *The Qur'an: Arabic Text with Corresponding English Meanings*, Jeddah: Abul-Qasim Publishing House, 1997.

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction to Psychology

﴿Indeed, We sent down to you the book for the people in truth. So whoever is guided — it is for [the benefit of] his soul; and whoever goes astray only goes astray to its detriment...﴾ *(Qur'an 39: 41)*

Islam, as a way of life, outlines a comprehensive model of the human being that incorporates the spiritual, psychological, emotional and social aspects. From its teachings, we discover that at the core, we are spiritual beings who need to cultivate and sustain a connection with our Creator, Allah (ﷻ). Through our connection with Allah (ﷻ), we experience inner peace and happiness, the elusive elements that humans have strived to achieve since the beginning of their existence. Our thoughts, emotions, will and behaviour must focus on attaining the pleasure of Allah (ﷻ). The key to sound mental health and well-being from the Islamic perspective is submission to Allah, the Exalted, the Almighty and His commandments, and to subsequently purifying the soul.

The main objective of this book is to describe in some detail the Islamic perspective on psychology, mental health and well-being. While philosophers, scientists and researchers throughout the ages have attempted to understand the true nature of humankind, we find that the most precise, detailed and comprehensive explanation of psychology is in the Qur'an and the *Hadith* (the collected statements

and actions of Prophet Muhammad).[2] Our Creator knows us better than we know ourselves, and His knowledge encompasses much that we will never be able to grasp. The exposition of our own human nature must be built upon what our Lord has revealed to us through His Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ).

The research of secular psychologists, despite all their efforts to avoid a religious foundation, actually substantiates the truth of Islam. As such, another purpose of this book is to present some of this contemporary scientific evidence. Islam is not in need of verification from science, for the miraculous Qur'an is truth itself. However, in this day and age, when science has been given priority over revelation, it is important to demonstrate the reality of our own discoveries. The arrogant will be forced into humility by the realization that what they have spent a lifetime 'proving' was expounded more than 1400 years ago in the astounding verses of the Qur'an and the profound statements of the Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ). This is not to discount the development and progress of science, but rather to place it in its proper perspective.

A subsidiary goal is to remind readers of the potential for self-transformation that Islam offers for each human being. No self-help book in the world can match the timeless, transformative, compelling nature of the teachings of Islam. One only needs to browse the stories of the Companions of the Prophet (ﷺ) and the first Muslim community to fathom the remarkable possibilities. Islam transformed the society of Arabia from one of oppression, deception, greed and arrogance to one of justice, honesty, mutual compassion, support and humility. No other system in the world, in all of the history of humankind, has been able to accomplish such a feat.

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[2] The Qur'an and the Hadith are the two primary sources of knowledge in Islam.

While this book does not intend to provide comprehensive coverage of psychology, it does cover the main topics of the discipline, including: an introduction to psychology; the true nature of humans; personality; the forces working on the soul; motivation; emotion; intelligence, reason, and wisdom; learning and modelling; the trials and tribulations of life; consciousness, sleep, and dreaming; lifespan development; social psychology; Satan, *jinn* (non-human, rational beings created by Allah from fire), and humans; abnormal psychology and mental illness; counselling and psychotherapy; attainment of peace and serenity; and the benefits of worship.

General definition of psychology

In any introductory psychology textbook available in the Western context, you will find a general definition of psychology similar to this:

> The scientific study of behavior and mental processes. Behavior is considered to be anything that an individual does, or any action that can be observed by others. *Mental processes* are the internal, subjective, unobservable components, such as thoughts, beliefs, feelings, sensations, perceptions, etc., that can be inferred from behavior.[3]

As a science, psychology attempts to answer questions such as: Who are we? What is our basic nature? From where do our thoughts, feelings and behaviours emanate? How can we modify or change these aspects of ourselves? Attempts are made to answer these questions through research and the use of the scientific method, which entails enquiry, observation, experimentation and rigorous analysis. The goals are generally to describe, explain, predict and control human behaviour, mental processes, and emotions.

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[3] Myers, D.G., 2007, *Psychology (8th ed.)*, New York: Worth Publishers, p. 2.

On the face of it, this seems like a worthy endeavour and a profession that is beneficial for society; however, on closer examination, particularly from an Islamic perspective, several shortcomings become apparent. One of the main weaknesses of contemporary psychology has been its disregard for the most important part of the human being — the soul. Although there have been some achievements, psychology's limited focus on the biological, behavioural and social aspects of existence have fallen short of producing comprehensive and complete theories of human nature or effective, enduring methods to enhance the mental health and well-being of individuals.

It is interesting to note that the origin of the word 'psychology' referred to the study of the soul or spirit. Before the separation of science and religion, the topic of the soul held a prominent place in discussions related to psychology. Even in modern times, there are professionals who adhere to this belief, primarily those coming from Judeo-Christian backgrounds. They are in the minority, though; the foremost theories in the field continue to be primarily secular in nature.

In fact, psychologists themselves are less likely to be religious than are members of the general population. A recent study found that in comparison to the general population in the United States:

> Psychologists were more than twice as likely to claim no religion (16% vs. 6%), three times more likely to describe religion as unimportant in their lives (48% vs. 15%), and five times more likely to deny belief in God (25% vs. 5%). They were also less likely to pray, be members of religious congregations, or attend worship services.[4]

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[4] Delaney, H.D., Miller, W.R. & Bisono, A.M., 2007, Religiosity and spirituality among psychologists: A survey of clinician members of the American Psychological Association, *Professional Psychology: Research and Practice*, 38 (5), p. 542.

When asked to consider the statement: "My whole approach to life is based on my religion," only 35% of psychologists agreed, as opposed to 72% of the general population. Asked if they ever believed in God, 66% of psychologists and 95% of the general population answered, "Yes, and continue to do so."[5] The authors concluded that psychologists are far less religious than the population they serve, although the participants did ascribe importance to spirituality. Spirituality in this case refers to the more personal side; it encompasses a broad definition that does not necessarily even include religion. For this reason, some people describe themselves as 'spiritual but not religious.'[6]

Psychology and belief in the Oneness of God

The secular definition of psychology assumes that we were put in this world and left to our own devices, without any divine intervention. According to this view, Allah (ﷻ) has no influence in our lives whatsoever, and many even deny that we were created by a higher power. In that case, of course, we would be nothing more than our physical bodies plus our emotions, thoughts and behaviours. Death would simply mean the cessation of our existence.

Most behavioural scientists have espoused scientific naturalism as the principal assumption upon which they base their theories and research. This philosophy says that:

> The universe is self-sufficient, without supernatural cause or control, and that in all probability the interpretation of the world given by sciences is the only satisfactory explanation of reality.[7]

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[5] Ibid., pp. 541-542.

[6] Ibid., p. 542.

[7] Honer, S.M., and Hunt, T.C., 1987, *Invitation to Philosophy: Issues and Options* (5th ed.). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, p. 225.

It assumes that human beings, and the entire universe, can be understood and explained without reference to God or to any divine influence.[8]

Scientific naturalism has its roots in positivism and empiricism. Positivism is the belief that, "Knowledge is limited to observable facts and their interrelations and, hence, that the sciences provide the only reliable knowledge."[9] Thus, scientific theories are proven by evidence, and they provide a complete understanding of reality.[10] Empiricism is a related concept; it assumes that the ultimate and true source of knowledge is experience, or inductive reasoning from experience.[11] In other words, if something cannot be experienced through the senses, it should not be accepted as truth.

In the Islamic conceptualization, it is clear that the reality is much more complex than modern scientists will admit. The unseen world (phenomena or aspects that cannot be known using ordinary human faculties) is actually much more extensive than the seen world, and this unseen world interacts with and influences the world that we observe. Allah (ﷻ) has given each of us a soul, and He is the sustainer and controller of our souls and our physical beings, as well as the entire universe. This fact is mentioned repeatedly throughout the Qur'an and is the foundation for the belief in the Oneness of Allah and His Lordship.

﴿Allah is the Creator of all things, and He is, over all things, disposer of affairs. To Him belong the keys of the heavens and the earth...﴾
(Qur'an 39: 62-63)

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[8] Richards, P.S., 2005, Theistic psychotherapy, *Psychology of Religion Newsletter 31 (1),* p. 1.

[9] Honer and Hunt, 1987, p. 226.

[10] Richards, P.S., and Bergin, A.E., 2005, *A Spiritual Strategy for Counseling and Psychotherapy* (2nd ed.), Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, pp. 33-34.

[11] Honer and Hunt, 1987, p. 220; Richards and Bergin, 2005, p. 34.

﴿Blessed is He in Whose Hand is the dominion, and He is over all things competent.﴾ *(Qur'an 67: 1)*

﴿Say: In whose hand is the realm of all things — and He protects while none can protect against Him — if you should know?﴾ *(Qur'an 23: 88)*

﴿While Allah created you and that which you do.﴾ *(Qur'an 37: 96)*

These verses relate to matters of creation, dominion and control. They indicate that Allah (ﷻ) is the sole Owner and Master of the universe. He controls, gives provisions, gives life, causes death, and will resurrect us from the grave. He maintains and manages the affairs of every creature without assistance from anyone. In relation to psychology, this control encompasses genetics, experiences, thoughts, emotions and behaviour.

As human beings, we have the ability to choose, and we may control certain elements, but this cannot be compared to the dominion of Allah (ﷻ). In fact, the human realm of influence on the course of events is rather limited; it is mainly relegated to mental choices between options presented to a person and his or her behaviours related to those choices. The final outcome may not be related to either of these. For example, a young man may decide to study engineering. He visits the university, completes the application, and is excited about his prospects. If Allah (ﷻ) has destined for him to study engineering there, he will do so, but if Allah (ﷻ) has destined something else for him, He will block that path.

It is for this reason that Muslims say *inshallah* (if Allah wills). In *Soorat* (Chapter) *al-Kahf* (the Cave), Allah (ﷻ) says:

﴿And never say of anything: Indeed, I will do that tomorrow, except [when adding], If Allah wills...﴾ *(Qur'an 18: 23-24)*

Knowing this not only enhances our understanding of human nature, but also assists us in our daily lives. Believing that Allah (ﷻ) alone has the ability to benefit and harm us can relieve a significant amount of distress related to events in our lives. We need not worry

about finding or keeping that 'ideal' job or spouse, or about daily hassles and struggles; instead, we say *Lâ ḥawla wa lâ quwwata illâ billâh* (There is no movement nor power except by Allah's will). In Soorat az-Zumar (the Groups), it states:

﴿And if you asked them: Who created the heavens and the earth? They would surely say: Allah. Say: Then have you considered what you invoke besides Allah? If Allah intended me harm, are they removers of His harm; or if He intended me mercy, are they withholders of His mercy? Say: Sufficient for me is Allah; upon Him [alone] rely the [wise] reliers.﴾ *(Qur'an 39: 38)*

Those who deny Allah's abilities and attributes take their own desires as their god, and many of the theorists in psychology have done just that. Allah (ﷻ) says:

﴿Have you seen he who has taken as his god his [own] desire, and Allah has sent him astray due to knowledge and has set a seal upon his hearing and his heart and put over his vision a veil? So who will guide him after Allah? Then will you not be reminded? And they say: There is not but our worldly life; we die and live, and nothing destroys us except time. And they have of that no knowledge; they are only assuming.﴾ *(Qur'an 45: 23-24)*

They have taken their own lust or vain desire as a god, and this desire becomes their ultimate criteria for right and wrong. They reject the most important criterion, which is based on the message of Allah (ﷻ). They have not appraised Allah (ﷻ) accurately, so He leaves them astray. The more they discount and even show contempt for the truth, the more they are misguided. Unfortunately, they misguide others as well.

﴿They have not appraised Allah with true appraisal, while the earth entirely will be [within] His grip on the Day of Resurrection, and the heavens will be folded in His Right Hand. Exalted is He and high above what they associate with Him.﴾ *(Qur'an 39: 67)*

Main weaknesses of secular approaches to psychology

In recent years, philosophers and scientists have begun to recognize the limitations of their own theoretical underpinnings. Many have agreed "that scientific naturalism provides an impoverished view of human nature and does not adequately account for the complexities and mysteries of life and of the universe."[12] Griffin stated that:

> Atheism, when combined with sensationism and materialism, also leads to a deterministic, relativistic and nihilistic worldview in which life has no ultimate meaning.[13]

Behavioural scientists have also rejected the negative view of human nature presented by scientific naturalism, because it is inadequate. It denies or trivializes some of the most distinctive and important aspects of the human being, including the mind, consciousness, morality, responsibility, meaning, purpose, and faith in God. It is particularly inadequate when applied to those in the helping professions, whose goal is to assist others with healing and personal growth.[14]

In his discussion of the purification of the soul, Zarabozo sums up the main weaknesses of the secular approaches to psychology.[15] He mentions that:

1. Humans are viewed as independent of their Creator and Lord (as discussed above).

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[12] Richards and Bergin, 2005, p. 37.

[13] Griffin, D.R., 2000, *Religion and Scientific Naturalism: Overcoming the Conflicts*, Albany: State University of New York Press, p. 14.

[14] Richards and Bergin, 2005, p. 45.

[15] Zarabozo, J, 2002, *Purification of the Soul: Process, Concept, and Means,* Denver, CO: Al-Basheer Company for Publications and Translations, p. 49.

2. Theories are based upon human intellect alone, while discounting revelation from the Creator. (See the discussion on knowledge below.)
3. Knowledge and research focus only on the tangible aspects of humans, while ignoring the spiritual and unseen elements.
4. Behaviours are generally seen to be determined solely by drives, reflexes, conditioning and social influences.

Zarabozo then elucidates the dangers of fabricated or secular theories:

> Man-made theories or distorted scriptures can indeed be very dangerous for one's spiritual well-being. These theories or scriptures may set a person on a path that is very far from the straight path that leads to spiritual purification. When these theories are supported by false but cleverly stated arguments or when these scriptures are propped up by religious bodies, their harms become even greater as they are believed in wholeheartedly by those who have been duped into thinking they are true and beneficial. The end result is that people can become blind to their misguidance.[16]

Definition of psychology from the Islamic perspective

An alternative definition of psychology from the Islamic perspective would include: the study of the soul; the ensuing behavioural, emotional, and mental processes; and both the seen and unseen aspects that influence these elements.

This description stems from the notion that the soul is the basic element of life. It drives the behaviour, emotions, and mental

[16] Ibid., pp. 44-45.

processes of the human. The human psyche is not purely psychological; its essence is spiritual and metaphysical. The *fiṭrah* (the natural inclinations instilled by Allah, which will be discussed in detail below) and the covenant of monotheism are inscribed on each soul, whether the person is Muslim or not.

Since its true nature is spiritual, the soul requires a spiritual connection to its source, the Creator, just as the body requires food and water to survive. Without this vital nourishment, the soul will suffer anxiety, depression, and despair. Many humans who currently experience mental health problems are suffering from ailments of the soul, not of the mind. The soul is calling out for its food, but instead of getting the real food that it requires — submission and closeness to Allah (ﷻ), it is fed junk food in the form of various psychotherapies and medications. For this reason, the soul continues to call out.

In the Islamic conceptualization of psychology, aspects of both the seen and unseen world may influence humans. In general, the focus of contemporary psychological theories is the seen world, which includes parents and other family members, peers, teachers, communities, media and so forth. Islamic psychology incorporates additional aspects of the unseen world to explain human nature: Allah (ﷻ), with His power and omnipotence, as well as the angels and the jinn. This does not negate the concept of choice and free will but places it within a context.

Sources of knowledge

One of the weaknesses of contemporary scholarship in the area of psychology is the refusal to acknowledge the most important source of information regarding the human being: revelation from Allah (ﷻ). This is similar to buying an expensive, brand new car and not reading the owner's manual to determine how to operate the various functions Haque (1998) mentions a statement by the U.S.

National Academy of Sciences (1984, p. 6) that outlines the 'modern' conceptualization of the link between science and religion as:

> Religion and science are separate and mutually exclusive realms of human thought whose presentation in the same context leads to misunderstanding of both scientific theory and religious belief. Secularization of knowledge has led to an emphasis on empiricism and experimentation in order to discover 'ultimate truths.' This is based upon the understanding that science is established upon facts that are verifiable, while religion is based upon subjective faith, which cannot be evaluated by objective methods.[17]

Science and the scientific method

Psychology has attempted to assert itself as a science by embracing the scientific method in attempting to prove its theories. Using the scientific method, researchers make observations of human phenomena and then form theories. A theory attempts to explain behaviour and mental processes through an integrated set of principles that organizes and predicts.[18] From these theories, they produce predictions or hypotheses that can be tested. Researchers then test the hypotheses and either validate, revise, or reject the theories.[19]

As discussed above, one of the limitations of the scientific method is its limited focus on the physical world and almost complete disregard for spiritual aspects of the human being. In reality, scientists are studying only part of the human being rather

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[17] Haque, A., 1998, Psychology and religion: Their relationship and integration from an Islamic perspective, *The American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences,* 15*,* p. 99.

[18] Myers, 2007, p. 24.

[19] Ibid., pp. 25-26.

than the complete person. There are many examples, but behaviourism is one school of thought that reflects the obvious limitations of the scientific method. Badri explains:

> The behaviorist school introduced a totally new approach, where learning could be studied via stimuli and observable responses and became the basis of psychology; feelings, the components of the mind, and the process of thinking were considered questions that could not be observed directly, and the methods used to study them (such as introspection, and the observation and reporting of inner experiencing) were criticized as being vague and unreliable and could not be controlled by experimental procedures. Accordingly, the behaviorists who wanted psychology to become an exact experimental science, like physics and chemistry, restricted their work to phenomena that could be observed in the laboratory, and the responses that could be measured and controlled became the focus of their experimental and scientific concerns.[20]

Badri goes on to explain the shortcomings of this approach. He points out that behaviourism denies the innate goodness or evilness of humans, while maintaining that what they believe in is neither true nor false. Behaviourists assert that nature, values and beliefs are determined entirely by environmental events, with no room for global truths or moral standards. This theory excludes any notion of freedom of choice or conscious, moral decision-making.[21]

Reliance on the scientific method has led to flawed, deficient, and contradictory theories and conclusions, which have led many people astray regarding the nature of humans. Jafari states:

The superimposition of empirical methodology on the study of

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[20] Badri, M. B., 2000, *Contemplation: An Islamic Psychospiritual Study*, Herndon, VA: International Institute of Islamic Thought, p. 2.

[21] Ibid., pp. 3-4.

> social and human phenomena has done more to create numerous fallacies than it has to develop viable and tenable propositions about human intellect, consciousness, behavior, and interpersonal influences. The materialistic approach of reducing the complex study of various human behaviors to tangible and measurable entities does not offer much help when it comes to understanding the spiritual, emotional, mental, and behavioral dimensions. While the scientific paradigm might be adequate for explaining scientific phenomena in physics and chemistry, it is too limiting for the social sciences.[22]

Another limitation of psychological science is that most of the research and theories have been based upon a limited segment of the human population, which is primarily American or European (although that trend seems to be changing somewhat). These societies tend to believe less in God and religion, and this is reflected in their behaviour, thoughts, and emotions. The question arises as to what is considered normal. Psychologists assume that the shared characteristics of research participants reflect 'normality,' but how accurate is this assumption?[23] In fact, this postulation has been called into question by a relatively new field called cross-cultural or cultural psychology. Scientists are now beginning to understand that what may be normal in one society may not be applicable to other societies. This is an important point to consider when attempting to extrapolate the research findings of Western science in Islamic societies. It is not necessary to discard all conclusions, but they must be viewed critically and sceptically.

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[22] Jafari, M.F., 1993, Counseling values and objectives: A comparison of Western and Islamic perspectives, *The American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences*, 10, p. 328.

[23] Zarabozo, 2002, pp. 37-38.

Knowledge and scholarship from the Islamic perspective

In an Islamic framework, it is revelation from the Creator that becomes the primary and most fundamental source of understanding. Allah (ﷻ) knows us better than we know ourselves, so to disregard revelation — particularly in the area of psychology — is sheer ignorance. Allah (ﷻ) asks:

﴿Does He Who created not know [those whom He created], while He is the Subtle, the Acquainted?﴾ *(Qur'an 67: 14)*

Allah (ﷻ) tells us that He is aware of what is in our souls and in our hearts:

﴿And We have already created humankind and know what his soul whispers to him, and We are closer [in knowledge] to him than [his] jugular vein.﴾ *(Qur'an 50: 16)*

﴿And conceal your speech or publicize it; indeed, He knows all of that within the breasts.﴾ *(Qur'an 67: 13)*

Revelation is the foundation upon which all knowledge is built; it is perfect and complete. This reflects the Muslims' firm and unwavering belief in their scripture (the Qur'an) as the final revealed word of Allah (ﷻ), a conviction that is unique to Islam. One of the first verses of the Qur'an notes this fact:

﴿This is the book about which there is no doubt, a guidance for those conscious of Allah.﴾ *(Qur'an 2: 2)*

The *hadiths* (statements or actions of Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) that were remembered and recorded by his Companions and followers) are also considered to be part of Allah's revelation and are second to the Qur'an in significance. It is only through revelation that we can comprehend the true nature of the soul and the unseen world, and ascertain the methods for purifying the soul and developing it to its fullest potential. Allah (ﷻ) is the only One with authentic and

complete knowledge of the unseen world, so we turn only to Him for this understanding. Human beings, especially Muslims, must not speculate or guess in relation to this domain. Kamali wrote:

> The proofs of *Sharia* have been further divided into transmitted proofs...and rational proofs... The authority of the transmitted proofs is independent of their conformity or otherwise with the dictates of reason, although... most of the transmitted proofs can also be rationally justified. However, the authority and binding force of the Qur'an, *Sunnah*[24] and *ijmâ'*[25] are independent of any rational justification that might exist in their favour... The rational proofs are, on the other hand, founded in reason and need to be rationally justified. They can only be accepted by virtue of their rationality... [However,] [r]ationality alone is not an independent proof in Islam, which is why the rational proofs cannot be totally separated from their transmitted proofs... the *adillah shar'iyyah*[26] are on the whole in harmony with reason.[27]

He then goes on to explain that this point is clear in the Sharia (Islamic law) in that it is addressed to the competent person who possesses the faculty of reasoning. The complete Sharia does not impose any obligation upon humans that would contradict the requirements of reason or intellect.[28]

Giving priority to revelation does not mean that Muslims ignore or neglect science and reason, as is evident in the previous discussion about the role of reason in Islamic law. The Qur'an itself, as well as various hadiths, urges humans to contemplate the universe and to

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[24] the practice and collected sayings of Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) that, together with the Qur'an, forms the basis of Islamic law (Editor)

[25] consensus: a method of deriving rulings in jurisprudence (Editor)

[26] proofs of Sharia (Editor)

[27] Kamali, M. H., 1991, *Principles of Islamic Jurisprudence,* Cambridge: Islamic Texts Society, pp. 10-11

[28] Ibid.

seek knowledge, but revelation should be the criteria by which we judge the developing sciences. Reasoning becomes secondary to these primary sources. When we allow human reasoning be the criteria, chaos ensues; this is evident in the writings of the philosophers who strayed from the evidence into the realm of imagination.

In Islam, there is no separation between the religious and secular, as is found in other systems. The sciences must be treated as a trust and should be assessed from the perspective of Islam. Scientific discoveries are only made through the grace and mercy of Allah (ﷻ); it is He who provides us with the minds, resources, and tools needed to research, discover, and develop. Through these discoveries, we come to appreciate Allah's power and glory in the universe. Knowledge will also establish that the universe is governed by laws in an orderly fashion rather than chaotically or by chance. If the science is correct, it will confirm what Allah (ﷻ) has revealed to us, and there are several examples in modern psychological research where this is the case. If, for some reason, there is a contradiction, this signifies that an error has entered into the scientific process or analysis.

Zarabozo points out that from the perspective of Islam and the Qur'an, there are various branches of knowledge, one of which is related to the outward, physical aspects of the cosmos. Knowledge of this realm of existence should lead people to the true, metaphysical insight concerning the reality of creation, and it should direct them to acknowledge the existence of the Creator, as well as His greatness. Inability or unwillingness to accept God indicates deficiencies in the mindset of those who have attained that knowledge.[29]

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[29] Zarabozo, 2002, p. 33.

CHAPTER TWO

The True Nature of Humans

As noted earlier, the secular perspective of psychology tends to view the basic nature of humans as being a combination of biological, cognitive, emotional, and behavioural elements. In the Islamic conceptualization, however, the basic nature of humans is spiritual and metaphysical. In reality, psychology deals with the soul. The term 'psyche', in fact, comes from the Greek word for soul. From the perspective of Islam, humans are dualistic, possessing both a body and a soul. The body is only a vehicle for the soul.[1] The condition of our soul, and the spiritual level that we attain, affects our thoughts, feelings and behaviour.

Lessons from the story of Adam and Eve

To understand the true nature of humans, it is important to go back to the story of their creation, as detailed in the Qur'an. We can glean a great deal of knowledge from this well-known story — knowledge that is beyond the realm of scientific theories and speculation. Allah (ﷻ) mentions:

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[1] Haque, A., 2004, Religion and mental health: The case of American Muslims, *Journal of Religion and Health*, 43(1), p. 48.

﴿And [mention, O Muhammad], when your Lord said to the angels: Indeed, I will make upon the earth a successive authority. They said: Will You place upon it one who causes corruption therein and sheds blood, while we declare Your praise and sanctify You? Allah said: Indeed, I know that which you do not know. And He taught Adam the names — all of them. Then He showed them to the angels and said: Inform Me of the names of these, if you are truthful. They said: Exalted are You, we have no knowledge except what You have taught us. Indeed, it is You who is the Knowing, the Wise. He said: O Adam, inform them of their names. And when he had informed them of their names, He said: Did I not tell you that I know the unseen [aspects] of the heavens and the earth? And I know what you reveal and what you have concealed. And [mention] when We said to the angels: Prostrate before Adam; so they prostrated, except for Satan. He refused and was arrogant and became of the disbelievers. And We said: O Adam, dwell you and your wife, in paradise and eat therefrom in [ease and] abundance from wherever you will. But do not approach this tree, lest you be among the wrongdoers. But Satan caused them to slip out of it and removed them from that [condition] in which they had been. And We said: Go down, [all of you], as enemies to one another, and you will have upon the earth a place of settlement and provision for a time. Then Adam received from his Lord [some] words, and He accepted his repentance. Indeed, it is He who is the accepting of repentance; the Merciful. We said: Go down from it, all of you. And when guidance comes to you from Me, whoever follows My guidance — there will be no fear concerning them, nor will they grieve. And those who disbelieve and deny Our signs — those will be companions of the fire, they will abide therein eternally.﴾ *(Quran 2: 30- 39)*

These verses provide the following lessons about human beings:[2]

[2] Zarabozo, 2002, pp. 50-53.

1. They are unique in their creation and distinct from the Creator. Humankind was placed on earth for a purpose, which is to worship Allah (ﷻ).
2. They have a very significant and eminent role in the world, as evidenced by Allah's orders to the angels to bow down to Adam (*'alayhi as-salâm* — peace be upon him). Humans are his successors on the earth, and all of the earth's resources have been made subservient to them.
3. They are blessed with valuable capabilities to match their positions. This includes the ability to understand, to intend or will something, to direct oneself to Allah (ﷻ), to follow His guidance and to repent after committing errors.
4. They have weaknesses, such as lowly desires, laziness and forgetfulness, that may lead them astray. Satan and his workers are always present, attempting to mislead them from the straight path. There is a continual struggle between human beings and these forces.
5. They have the potential to elevate themselves by submitting to guidance from Allah (ﷻ), or to debase themselves by becoming heedless of that guidance and befriending Satan.
6. Their key to salvation and happiness is in believing and following the guidance that comes from Allah (ﷻ). This will determine the value of this life and their status in the hereafter.

Blessings from Allah and subservience of Earth's resources

Several verses in the Qur'an feature the honour and blessings that Allah (ﷻ) has bestowed upon human beings due to their position in this world. He has given us innate abilities to purify

ourselves and to fulfil our purpose in this life. He has also blessed us with abundant provisions and subjected to us all that is in the universe, in order to ease our journey and to facilitate self-actualization. An element of this process entails the servant's gratitude for all that Allah (ﷻ) has provided.

﴿It is He Who made the earth tame [stable and subservient] for you — so walk among its slopes and eat of His provision — and to Him is the resurrection.﴾ *(Qur'an 67: 15)*

﴿It is Allah Who subjected to you the sea so that ships may sail upon it by His command and that you may seek of His bounty; and perhaps you will be grateful. And He has subjected to you whatever is in the heavens and whatever is on the earth — all from Him. Indeed in that are signs for a people who give thought.﴾ *(Qur'an 45: 12-13)*

﴿And We have certainly honoured the children of Adam and carried them on the land and sea and provided for them of the good things, and preferred them over much of what We have created, with [definite] preference.﴾ *(Qur'an 17: 70)*

﴿It is Allah Who created the heavens and the earth and sent down rain from the sky and produced thereby some fruits as provision for you and subjected for you the ships to sail through the sea by His command and subjected for you the rivers. And He subjected for you the sun and the moon, continuous [in orbit], and subjected for you the night and the day. And He gave you from all you asked of Him. And if you should count the favours [blessings] of Allah, you could not enumerate them. Indeed, humankind is [generally] most unjust and ungrateful.﴾ *(Qur'an 14: 32- 34)*

Without these provisions, we would struggle to accomplish our various tasks and to develop our communities, our nations and ourselves. The sun provides us with light and warmth, the sun and moon allow us to calculate time, the earth enables us to grow plants and trees, the sea allows us to travel, and so on. Some provisions are obviously necessary for survival on this earth, such as food and water.

The fiṭrah

Believing in the existence of Allah (ﷻ) is instinctive in human beings. This innate instinct is termed 'fiṭrah' and is generally defined as the pristine nature within humans that leads them to acknowledge the truth of Allah's existence and to follow His guidance. It is an inborn tendency to affirm a transcendent being who created us, the world around us, and all that is in it. This gift from Allah (ﷻ) is engraved upon our souls, so that even those who turn away from His guidance continue to possess this innate characteristic. Allah describes it in Soorat ar-Room (Rome):

﴿So direct your face [self] towards the religion, inclining to truth. [Adhere] to the fiṭrah of Allah upon which He has created [all] people. No change should there be in the creation of Allah. That is the correct religion, but most of the people do not know.﴾

(Qur'an 30: 30)

The essential aspect of the fiṭrah is *tawḥeed*, belief in the Oneness of Allah (ﷻ) with no partners. This belief inclines a person to submit completely to Allah (ﷻ) and to seek to become closer to Him. Those who believe in Allah (ﷻ) and worship Him alone are in harmony with their very own natures, while those who believe in and worship other deities are rebelling against their own natural inclinations. Islam is called the religion of fiṭrah because it is the religion that guides humanity to true faith in Allah (ﷻ) and complete fulfilment of their potential. All of the prophets were sent to remind people of this essential knowledge and to teach them the Sharia as a comprehensive guidance for living in submission to Allah (ﷻ). As a blessing from Allah, the prophets themselves followed these guidelines and were exemplary models for humankind.

There are several influences, including parents and society, which may lead a person astray from the true religion, resulting in a covering up of the fiṭrah. The Prophet (ﷺ) related: «Every child is

born in a state of fiṭrah, then his parents convert him to Judaism, Christianity or Magianism. Just like an animal giving birth to a perfect baby animal — do you find it mutilated at all?» Then Abu Hurayrah read the above verse from Soorat ar-Room *(Qur'an 30: 30).* (recorded by Bukhari and Muslim)

These environmental influences can be extremely powerful and, as the Prophet (ﷺ) indicated, they may completely turn the person away from the straight path and onto various forms of deviated beliefs and practices.

The devil may also lead people away from their natural states. The Prophet (ﷺ) affirmed: «Behold, my Lord commanded me to teach you that which you do not know and which He has taught me today. (He stated that) the property that I (Allah) have conferred upon them is lawful for them. I have created My servants all having a natural inclination to the worship of Allah, but the devil comes to them and turns them away from their (true) religion. He makes unlawful what I declared lawful for them, and he commands them to ascribe partners with Me for which no authority has been sent down.» (recorded by Muslim)

Evidence for the fiṭrah

The majority of people in the world believe in God in one form or another (although atheism, a concept introduced only in the last one hundred years, seems to be growing in popularity). Most religions of the world have a concept of a 'higher being' or an awareness of God. Allah (ﷻ) mentions this fact in the Qur'an:

﴿And if you asked them who created them, they would surely say: Allah. So how are they deluded?﴾ *(Qur'an 43: 87)*

﴿And if you asked them: Who created the heavens and the earth? They would surely say: Allah. Say: Then have you considered what you invoke besides Allah...?﴾ *(Qur'an 39: 38)*

A millennium worldwide survey by Gallup International in sixty countries found that two-thirds of respondents reported that God was very important in their personal lives, and 87% considered themselves belonging to some religion. It is interesting to note that 97% of respondents in West Africa, where Muslims are the largest and most practicing group, said that God was very important in their lives, while 99% of West Africans reported that they belonged to some religion. According to the findings, women were more religious than men (69% to 57%), and the elderly were more religious than young and middle-aged people (63% to 59% and 56% respectively).[3]

In another study by Gallup Poll (2007-2008) to determine the most and least religious countries in the world, eight of the eleven most religious countries had predominantly Muslim populations (Egypt, Bangladesh, Indonesia, Sierra Leone, Senegal, Djibouti, Morocco and the United Arab Emirates). In contrast, only one Muslim country (Azerbaijan) made the list of least religious countries.[4]

A national survey of 36,000 American adults by the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life (one of the largest polls of Americans' religious beliefs) found that 87% of respondents were absolutely (71%) or fairly (17%) certain about belief in God or a universal spirit, and 82% reported that religion was very (56%) or somewhat (26%) important in their life. Twenty-one percent of those who described themselves as atheists expressed a belief in God or a universal spirit, and more than half of those who called

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[3] Gallup International Association, 2000, *Religion in the World at the End of the Millennium,* retrieved May 6, 2009 from http://www.gallup-international.com/ContentFiles/millennium15.asp.

[4] Crabtree, S. and Pelham, B., (2007-2008), What Alabamians and Iranians have in common, retrieved May 5, 2010 from www.gallup.com/poll/114211/alabamians-iranians-common.aspx.

themselves agnostic expressed a similar conviction.[5]

Another evidence for the fiṭrah is that when in distress or suffering from tribulation, humans are likely to call out to Allah (ﷻ). Numerous verses in the Qur'an, as well as countless personal experiences, confirm this.

﴿And when adversity touches man, he calls upon Us; then when We bestow on him a favour from Us, he says: I have only been given it because of [my] knowledge. Rather, it is a trial, but most of them do not know.﴾ *(Qur'an 39: 49)*

﴿And when adversity touches man, he calls upon his Lord, turning to Him [alone]; then when He bestows on him a favour from Himself, he forgets Him whom he called upon before, and he attributes equals to Allah to mislead [people] from His way.﴾ *(Qur'an 39: 8)*

﴿And when We bestow favour upon man, he turns away and distances himself; but when evil touches him, then he is full of extensive supplication.﴾ *(Qur'an 41: 51)*

﴿And when affliction touches man, he calls upon Us, whether lying on his side or sitting or standing; but when We remove from him his affliction, he continues [in disobedience] as if he had never called upon Us to [remove] an affliction that touched him. Thus is made pleasing to the transgressors that which they have been doing.﴾ *(Qur'an 10: 12)*

﴿It is He who enables you to travel on land and sea until, when you are in ships and they sail with them by a good wind, and they rejoice therein, there comes a stormy wind, and the waves come upon them from everywhere, and they assume that they are surrounded [doomed], supplicating Allah, sincere to Him in religion: If You should save us from this, we will surely be among the thankful. But

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[5] Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, 2007, U. S. Religious Landscape Survey, http://religions.pewforum.org/?sid=ST2008062300818, accessed 06/05/09.

when He saves them, at once they commit injustice upon the earth without right. O humankind, your injustice is only against yourselves, [being merely] the enjoyment of worldly life. Then to Us is your return, and We will inform you of what you used to do.﴾

(Qur'an 10: 22-23)

The purpose of suffering afflictions is to assist the fiṭrah in breaking through the layers and layers of disbelief and misconceptions that may have been built around it over a lifetime. In some cases, the fiṭrah is buried quite deep. During these times, the distraught individuals call out to the being that they know in their heart to be the only one capable of providing assistance. In fact, this calling out is so automatic that its instinctive nature is obvious. Anyone who has watched a television program with videos of real life-and-death situations can attest to this fact. The majority of distressed individuals on these videos (who are mainly non-Muslim) call out to God in one way or another.

Covenant of monotheism inscribed on every soul

When they were created, all souls testified that Allah (ﷻ) is their Lord and thus made a covenant with Allah to worship and obey Him. The real purpose of this covenant is so that humans will not have an excuse on the Day of Judgment if they have refused to believe and to follow the true path. This covenant is mentioned in the Qur'an:

﴿And [mention] when your Lord took from the children of Adam — from their loins — their descendants and made them testify of themselves [saying to them]: Am I not your Lord? They said: Yes, we have testified. [This] lest you should say on the Day of Resurrection: Indeed, we were of this unaware.﴾ *(Qur'an 7: 172)*

In another verse, Allah (ﷻ) mentions that those who preserved the covenant will be rewarded with paradise:

﴿And paradise will be brought near to the righteous, not far. [It will

be said]: This is what you were promised. It is for those oft-returning in repentance and those who preserve [their covenant with Allah], who feared the Most Merciful unseen and brought a heart turned in repentance.﴾ *(Qur'an 50: 31-33)*

In relation to the fiṭrah and our covenant with Allah (ﷻ), it is evident that believing and knowing about Allah, and even worshipping Him, is part of the nature of our souls and our beings. All human beings are born pure, with this natural inclination to have faith in and to venerate Allah (ﷻ), to be righteous and virtuous, and to comprehend our unique roles in this universe. If the fiṭrah is allowed to grow and develop without any alterations, the soul will naturally incline towards Allah (ﷻ) and follow His will. The knowledge of, and relationship with, Allah (ﷻ) that is built upon this natural tendency will provide us with the true understanding of good and evil, truth and falsehood, throughout our lifetimes.

Purpose of life: To worship Allah

Islam as a way of life has set out a clear purpose and meaning for life. Allah asks:

﴿Then did you think that We created you uselessly and that to Us you would not be returned?﴾ *(Qur'an 23: 115)*

People have been searching for meaning in their lives throughout the centuries, but in the Islamic framework, it is clearly and simply elucidated. This purpose is none other than to worship Allah (ﷻ), as commanded in several verses of the Qur'an:

﴿Say [O Muhammad]: Indeed, I have been commanded to worship Allah, [being] sincere to Him in religion.﴾ *(Qur'an 39: 11)*

﴿And I did not create the jinn and humankind except to worship Me.﴾ *(Qur'an 51: 56)*

﴿O humankind, worship your Lord, Who created you and those before you, that you may become righteous.﴾ *(Qur'an 2: 21)*

﴿Worship Allah and associate nothing with Him...﴾ *(Qur'an 4: 36)*

﴿And We certainly sent into every nation a messenger [saying]: Worship Allah and avoid false objects of worship...﴾ *(Qur'an 16: 36)*

Worshipping Allah (ﷻ) is the purpose of our life and our creation. The types of worship that are permissible include beliefs, actions of the heart, speech, physical actions and financial acts. Beliefs form the basis of all other acts of worship and must centre on tawḥeed, the belief that Allah (ﷻ) is the One and Only Lord. Actions of the heart include love, fear, hope, submitting, trusting and repenting, and we must direct them only to Allah. Speech includes seeking refuge with Allah (ﷻ), seeking His help, calling upon Him, glorifying and praising Him, and reciting the Qur'an. Physical actions include praying, fasting, performing Hajj (the major pilgrimage to Makkah), and so forth. Financial actions include paying *zakât* (an obligatory 'alms tax' on wealth, payable by Muslims who can afford it, and distributed to other Muslims who qualify as recipients) and other forms of charity.[6]

Through worship, we maintain a relationship and connection with our Creator, to Whom we will return. Worship in the Islamic sense is not limited to the ritualistic acts; it encompasses all actions that are done sincerely for the sake of Allah (ﷻ) and according to the Sharia. Abandoning what is forbidden, treating others with kindness, enjoining good and forbidding evil are all considered acts of worship for which we will be rewarded. Allah (ﷻ) has given us free will to choose whether to worship Him or not; depending on the choice that we make, we can either elevate or abase ourselves.

Sincere worship (for the sake of Allah) has three essential components; if any of these pillars is missing, the act of worship is not valid:

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[6] al-Ashqar, U.S., 2003, *Belief in Allah in the Light of the Qur'an and Sunnah,* Riyadh, International Islamic Publishing House, p. 402.

1. Purity of intention. If intentions are not purely for the sake of Allah (ﷻ), good deeds will not be accepted. The Prophet (ﷺ) said: «Actions are by intentions, and every person shall have that which he intended...» (recorded by Bukhari and Muslim) The topic of intention will be discussed in more detail later inshallah.
2. Sincerity, or a resolve to strive to obey the commands of Allah (ﷻ) and to avoid that which He has prohibited.
3. Following the Messenger (ﷺ) by worshipping according to what Allah (ﷻ) has prescribed through His prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) and his Sunnah.

It is part of human nature to seek out an object of veneration. If a person does not acknowledge the right of Allah (ﷻ) to be worshipped alone, he or she will find something else to worship, whether it be a statue, another human being, a philosophy, money, or any other such object or idol. This is *shirk,* or associating partners with Allah (ﷻ). Shirk, which is the opposite of tawḥeed, is the most serious sin, for which the unrepentant will reside in hellfire forever. Allah (ﷻ) states:

﴿...Indeed, he who associates others with Allah — Allah has forbidden him paradise, and his refuge is the fire. And there are not for the wrongdoers any helpers.﴾ *(Qur'an 5: 72)*

﴿Indeed, Allah does not forgive association with Him, but He forgives what is less than that for whom He wills. And he who associates others with Allah has certainly fabricated a tremendous sin.﴾ *(Qur'an 4: 48)*

«Abdullah ibn Mas'ood (*raḍiya Allâhu 'anhu* — may Allah be pleased with him) said: I asked the Messenger of Allah: Which sin is the greatest with Allah? He said: That you claim that Allah has a rival, when He has created you.» (recorded by Bukhari and Muslim)

Satan is involved in leading humankind down the path of shirk, as Allah (ﷻ) reminds us:

﴿Did I not enjoin upon you, O children of Adam, that you not worship Satan — [for] indeed, he is to you a clear enemy — And that you worship [only] Me? This is a straight path.﴾ *(Qur'an 36: 60- 61)*

Satan knows that shirk will lead the soul to the hellfire, so his prime strategy for trapping humans is to lure them into setting up other objects of worship as intercessors with Allah (ﷻ):

﴿And they worship other than Allah that which neither harms them nor benefits them, and they say: These are our intercessors with Allah. Say: Do you inform Allah of something He does not know in the heavens or on the earth? Exalted is He and high above what they associate with Him.﴾ *(Qur'an 10: 18)*

Life is a test for us, to determine whether we will obey Allah (ﷻ), submitting ourselves to Him in worship, or be disobedient and arrogant, following the path of Satan. We will learn the results of our test on the Day of Judgment, when believers and disbelievers are sent to their respective eternal abodes. Allah (ﷻ) warns:

﴿[He] Who created death and life to test you [as to] which of you is best in deed — and He is Exalted in Might, the Forgiving.﴾ *(Qur'an 67: 2)*

He (ﷻ) also mentions this in the story of Adam and Eve, when they were sent to the earth.

﴿We said: Go down from it, all of you. And when guidance comes to you from Me, whoever follows My guidance — there will be no fear concerning them, nor will they grieve. And those who disbelieve and deny Our signs — those will be companions of the fire; they will abide therein eternally.﴾ *(Qur'an 2: 38-39)*

Absolute obedience and submission to Allah (ﷻ) should be the goal of every human being. That means directing one's soul — one's self, with its thoughts, emotions and actions — to the one true God, Allah (ﷻ). This was the message brought by all of the messengers, and it continues to this day through the message of Islam. The Qur'anic stories about Abraham (عليه السلام) and the other prophets

highlight their sincere submission:

﴿And [mention] when Abraham was raising the foundations of the House and [with him] Ishmael [saying]: Our Lord, accept [this] from us. Indeed, You are the Hearing, the Knowing. Our Lord, and make us Muslims [in submission] to You and from our descendants a Muslim nation [in submission] to You. Show us our rites [of pilgrimage] and accept our repentance. Indeed, You are the accepting of repentance, the Merciful. Our Lord, and send among them a messenger from themselves who will recite to them your verses and teach them the Book and wisdom and purify them. Indeed, You are the Exalted in Might, the Wise. And who would be averse to the religion of Abraham except one who makes a fool of himself? We had chosen him in this world, and indeed he, in the hereafter, will be among the righteous. When his Lord said to him: Submit, he said: I have submitted [in Islam] to the Lord of the worlds. And Abraham instructed his sons [to do the same] and [so did] Jacob [saying]: O my sons, indeed Allah has chosen for you this religion, so do not die except while you are Muslims. Or were you witnesses when death approached Jacob, when he said to his sons: What will you worship after me? They said: We will worship your God and the God of your fathers, Abraham and Ishmael and Isaac — one God. And we are Muslims [in submission] to Him. That was a nation which has passed on. It will have [the consequence of] what it earned, and you will have what you have earned. And you will not be asked about what they used to do. They say: Be Jews or Christians [so] you will be guided. Say: Rather, [we follow] the religion of Abraham, inclining toward truth, and he was not of the polytheists. Say [O believers]: We have believed in Allah and what has been revealed to us and what has been revealed to Abraham and Ishmael and Isaac and Jacob and the descendants, and what was given to Moses and Jesus and what was given to the prophets from their Lord. We make no distinction between any of them, and we are Muslims [in submission] to Him. So if they believe in the same as you believe in, then they have been

[rightly] guided; but if they turn away, they are only in dissension, and Allah will be sufficient for you against them. He is the Hearing, the Knowing. [Say: Ours is] the religion of Allah, and who is better than Allah in [ordaining] religion? We are worshippers of Him.﴾

(Qur'an 2: 127-138)

These verses indicate that the message of all of the previous prophets was submission to Allah (ﷻ), and they instructed their children to cling to Islam until their deaths. It is through submission that the soul fulfils its covenant with Allah (ﷻ) and thus its true purpose in life. This submission can only be perfected through the religion of Islam; no other religion or way of life can achieve this goal, and Allah (ﷻ) will not accept any of them on the Day of Judgment. The fundamental defect in other religions is shirk, or worshipping other gods, which misleads the followers.

Allah (ﷻ) makes clear the absurdity and irrationality of worshipping false gods, which cannot harm, benefit, provide for or restrict us.

﴿And they worship besides Allah that which does not possess for them [the power of] provision from the heavens and the earth at all, and [in fact], they are unable.﴾ *(Qur'an 16: 73)*

﴿Say, [O Muhammad]: Have you considered that which you invoke besides Allah? Show me what they have created of the earth; or did they have partnership in [creation of] the heavens? Bring me a scripture [revealed] before this or a [remaining] trace of knowledge, if you should be truthful. Who is more astray than he who invokes besides Allah those who will not respond to him until the Day of Resurrection, and they, of their invocations, are unaware? When the people are gathered [that Day], they [who were invoked] will be enemies to them, and they will be deniers of their worship.﴾

(Qur'an 46: 4-6)

﴿And if you asked them who created the heavens and the earth, they would surely say: Allah. Say: Then have you considered what you

invoke besides Allah? If Allah intended me harm, are they removers of His harm; or if He intended me mercy, are they withholders of His mercy? Say: Sufficient for me is Allah; upon Him [alone] rely the [wise] reliers.﴾ *(Qur'an 39: 38)*

﴿...And those whom you invoke other than Him do not possess [as much as] the membrane of a date seed. If you invoke them, they do not hear your supplication; and if they heard, they would not respond to you. On the Day of Resurrection, they will deny your association. And none can inform you like [one] acquainted [with all matters].﴾ *(Qur'an 35: 13-14)*

He (ﷻ) mentions the favours that He has provided for the disbelievers and asks how they can refuse to believe after this:

﴿How can you disbelieve in Allah when you were lifeless and He brought you to life; then He will cause you to die, then He will bring you [back] to life, and then to Him you will be returned.﴾ *(Qur'an 2: 28)*

﴿O humankind, what has deceived you concerning your Lord, the Generous, Who created you, proportioned you, and balanced you? In whatever form He willed has He assembled you.﴾ *(Qur'an 82: 6-8)*

﴿What is [the matter] with you that you do not attribute to Allah [due] grandeur, while He has created you in stages? Do you not consider how Allah has created seven heavens in layers and made the moon therein a [reflected] light and made the sun a burning lamp? And Allah has caused you to grow from the earth a [progressive] growth. Then He will return you into it and extract you [another] extraction.﴾ *(Qur'an 71: 13-18)*

﴿And Allah has made for you from yourselves mates and has made for you from your mates sons and grandchildren, and has provided for you from the good things. Then in falsehood do they believe and in the favour of Allah they disbelieve?﴾ *(Qur'an 16: 72)*

﴿Say, [O Muhammad]: Praise be to Allah, and peace be upon His servants whom He has chosen. Is Allah better, or what they associate

with Him? [More precisely,] is He [not best] who created the heavens and the earth, and sent down for you rain from the sky, causing to grow thereby gardens of joyful beauty, which you could not [otherwise] have grown the trees thereof? Is there a deity with Allah? [No,] but they are a people who ascribe equals [to Him]. Is He [not best] who made the earth a stable ground and placed within it rivers and made for it firmly set mountains and placed between the two seas a barrier? Is there a deity with Allah? [No,] but most of them do not know. Is He [not best] who responds to the desperate one when he calls upon Him and removes evil, and makes you inheritors of the earth? Is there a deity with Allah? Little do you remember. Is He [not best] who guides you through the darknesses of the land and sea and Who sends the winds as good tidings before His mercy? Is there a deity with Allah? High is Allah above whatever they associate with Him. Is He [not best] who begins creation and then repeats it and who provides for you from the heaven and earth? Is there a deity with Allah? Say: Produce your proof, if you should be truthful.﴾

(Qur'an 27: 59-64)

Those who worship something or someone other than Allah (ﷻ) fail to fulfil their true purpose in life. They oppress, degrade and humiliate themselves in this way, and their personalities, development, and overall lives will be incomplete and distorted. Since they lack true happiness and contentment, they will haphazardly attempt to find any means for fulfilment.

ʻAqeedah, eemân, and psychology

The term ʻ*aqeedah* refers to the belief system based on a firm conviction in all the fundamentals of faith and of the oneness of Allah; it is what people believe, affirm in their hearts, and accept as truth. The matters that the Muslims must believe wholeheartedly, transmitted through revelation, are mentioned in the following verse:

﴿The Messenger has believed in what was revealed to him from his Lord, and [so have] the believers. All of them have believed in Allah and His angels and His books and His messengers, [saying]: We make no distinction among any of His messengers. And they say: We hear and we obey. [We seek] Your forgiveness, our Lord, and to You is the [final] destination.﴾ *(Qur'an 2: 285)*

The most fundamental belief, as already mentioned, is tawḥeed. Tawḥeed is the belief that Allah (ﷻ) is One without any partner in His dominion, control and actions; One without similitude in His essence, names, and attributes; and One without rival in His divinity and in worship.[7] Allah (ﷻ) is the Lord and owner of all things; it is He who provides and sustains. Allah (ﷻ) is the One who gives life and causes death; He controls the affairs of all His creation. For this reason, only He is worthy of any form of worship, including physical acts (prayer, fasting, pilgrimage and animal sacrifice) as well as actions of the heart (love, fear and hope).

This belief must be fixed, without any wavering or doubt, as Allah (ﷻ) says in the Qur'an:

﴿The believers are only the ones who have believed in Allah and His Messenger, and then doubt not, but strive with their properties and their lives in the cause of Allah. It is those who are the truthful.﴾ *(Qur'an 49: 15)*

Any doubt in the heart will indicate a lack of complete belief in tawḥeed.

'Aqeedah is important for the psychology of the human being because it provides us with direction in life and it guides us to the straight path that will lead to self-actualization and self-fulfilment. It is the foundation upon which all else is built. Umar al-Ashqar summarizes the importance of 'aqeedah for humankind:

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[7] Philips, A.A.B., 2005, *The Fundamentals of Tawheed,* Riyadh, Saudi Arabia: International Islamic Publishing House, p. 17.

> The Islamic '*aqeedah* is as essential for man as water and air. Without this '*aqeedah* he is lost and confused. The Islamic '*aqeedah* is the only one which can answer the questions that have always preoccupied man and still preoccupy human thought and cause frustration: where did I come from? Where did the universe come from? Who is the Creator? What are His attributes and names? Why did He create us and the universe? What is our role in this universe? What is our relationship to the Creator who created us?[8]

Eemân is often translated as faith; it is when 'aqeedah is firmly established in the heart, spoken by the tongue, and confirmed by action. Al-Ashqar explains the powerful influence of eemân as:

> Eemân — creed/belief is knowledge which reverberates deep in the conscience, so that the heart does not feel any hesitation concerning it, rather filled with the comfort of certainty. *Eemân* has to do with feelings and conscience which take an idea from the level of reason into the depths of the heart, as if the idea is food and drink which nourish the soul. Thus the idea becomes one of the elements in its life, and *eemân* changes the idea into a vital driving force which lets nothing stand in its way. This is the difference between religion and philosophy. The aim of philosophy is knowledge, and the aim of religion is eemân. The goal of philosophy is dry knowledge which takes a lifeless form, whilst the goal of religion is an energetic soul and vital power.[9]

So eemân is like energy for the soul, and it provides the individual with the strength and ability to carry out essential duties in life and to work for the betterment of the self, the family and the society. When eemân is absent, a person becomes like a lifeless, heartless robot who goes through the motions of life without feeling

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[8] al-Ashqar, 2003a, p. 35.

[9] Ibid., p. 74.

or determination. In the Islamic perspective of psychology, 'aqeedah and eemân are the essential life forces for the soul and for the human being as a whole. The basis of eemân is resolute belief in Allah (ﷻ) and His Oneness, accountability on the Day of Judgment, and life in the hereafter. Eemân is related to other aspects of the human being, including thoughts, emotions and motivations, as well as the psychological state and well-being. Building eemân that is based upon Qur'an and Sunnah will be consistent with the innate nature of the human and thus lead to harmony and tranquillity within the soul.

Belief in and love of Allah

The foundation of faith is tawḥeed, and one of the most important elements of tawḥeed is loving Allah (ﷻ) more than everyone and everything in this worldly life. Thus love of Allah (ﷻ) is actually the essence of Islam.

﴿And [yet], among the people are those who take other than Allah as equals [to Him]. They love them as they [should] love Allah. But those who believe are stronger in love for Allah...﴾ *(Qur'an 2: 165)*

When a person's love for Allah is complete, his or her faith becomes perfect; when this love is flawed, the belief in the Oneness of Allah becomes imperfect.[10] Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyah said:

> The heart is rectified by two things. One of them is that the love of Allah must take precedence over all other loves in this life, so that if this love and the love of something else presented themselves to him, the love of Allah would come first and his actions would follow this order.[11]

Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) said: «Whoever possesses (the following) three qualities will relish the sweetness of faith: the one to

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[10] al-Fozan, S., 1997, *Concise Commentary on 'The Book of Tawheed'*, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia: Darussalam Publishers and Distributors, p. 249.

[11] al-Jawziyyah, I.Q., 2000*, The Invocation of God (Al-Wabil al-Sayyib min al-Kalim al-Tayyib),* Cambridge, UK: Islamic Texts Society, pp. 5-6.

whom Allah (ﷻ) and His Messenger become dearer than anything else; the one who loves a person and he loves him only for the sake of Allah; and the one who hates to revert to disbelief, after Allah has saved him from it, as much as he hates to be thrown into the hellfire.» (recorded by Bukhari and Muslim)

This hadith indicates that the individual who loves Allah (ﷻ) and His Messenger more than all others who are dear to him, will taste the sweetness of faith and will find pleasure in performing acts of obedience.[12]

Belief in the hereafter

The hereafter is part of the unseen world, of which we have limited knowledge. Allah (ﷻ) describes the hereafter in some detail in the Qur'an, in order to provide us with a sense of its pleasures and punishments. We can never truly comprehend them, but we are given a similitude in order to connect in some way. «The Prophet (ﷺ) said that Allah (ﷻ) said: I have prepared for My righteous slaves that which no eye has seen, no ear has heard, and has never crossed the mind of any human being.» Then the Prophet (ﷺ) said: «Recite, if you wish: ﴿No person knows what is kept hidden for them of joy as a reward for what they used to do.﴾ *(Qur'an 32: 17)*.» (recorded by Bukhari)

The purpose of mentioning paradise and hellfire throughout the Qur'an is to remind us of our inevitable destination; it must be one or the other. The Qur'an mentions each one the same number of times, reflecting the equal likelihood of going to either one. This reminder should ultimately have an influence upon the heart and behaviour and should direct the person to the righteous path, due to the hope of being rewarded and the fear of being punished.

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[12] al-Fozan, 1997, p. 253.

Eemân increases and decreases

While there is a difference of opinion regarding the concept of eemân, the scholars of *ahl as-Sunnah wal-Jamâ'ah* (people of the Sunnah and the community) indicate that it is not constant. Our level of faith increases with obedience to Allah (ﷻ) and decreases with disobedience. As believers, we should pay attention to our level of eemân, being aware of when it increases and decreases and striving to be in a state of elevated eemân as much as possible.

There are several verses in the Qur'an indicating that the faith of a believer can fluctuate, either increasing or decreasing:

﴿The believers are only those who, when Allah is mentioned, their hearts become fearful, and when His verses are recited to them, it increases them in faith; and upon their Lord they rely.﴾ *(Qur'an 8: 2)*

﴿It is He who sent down tranquillity into the hearts of the believers that they would increase in faith along with their [present] faith...﴾ *(Qur'an 48: 4)*

﴿Those to whom people [hypocrites] said: Indeed, the people have gathered against you, so fear them. But it [merely] increased them in faith, and they said: Sufficient for us is Allah, and [He is] the best disposer of affairs.﴾ *(Qur'an 3: 173)*

﴿And whenever a soorah is revealed, there are among them [the hypocrites] those who say: Which of you has this increased in faith? As for those who believed, it has increased them in faith, while they are rejoicing.﴾ *(Qur'an 9: 124)*

The Prophet (ﷺ) stated that: «Every heart has a cloud covering it, with the similitude of a cloud covering a shining moon. It suddenly becomes dark when the cloud covers, but its brightness returns once the cloud has passed.» (recorded by aṭ-Ṭabarâni and graded reliable by al-Albâni)[13]

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[13] al-Munajjid, M. S., 2009*, Weakness of Faith,* Riyadh: International Islamic Publishing House, p. 47.

In this hadith, the Prophet (ﷺ) presents an analogy. Our hearts are likened to the moon; just as the moon is sometimes covered by clouds that conceal its light, the heart is sometimes covered by clouds of sin that cover its light. At other times, the clouds go away, and the light shines again in the heart. The light increases when we strive to engage in acts that will increase our eemân.[14]

The Prophet (ﷺ) explained: «Faith wears out in the heart of any of you just as clothes wear out, so ask Allah to renew the faith in your hearts.»[15] (a sound hadith recorded by al-Ḥâkim, aṭ-Ṭabarâni and al-Ḥaythami)[16]

There are many ways to renew and increase our faith, and we will discuss them in detail later in the book inshallah. The main ways to accomplish this are by gaining knowledge, increasing righteous deeds, obeying Allah (ﷻ), remembering Him, contemplating the verses of the Qur'an, pondering Allah's names and attributes, and remembering death and the hereafter.[17]

The nature of the soul

Before entering into a discussion of principles related to the soul, it will be beneficial to define a few of the key terms.

Rooḥ

The term *rooḥ* (also known as spirit, soul, or breath of life) is used in the Qur'an in various ways referring to metaphysical entities

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[14] al-Munajjid, 2009, p. 48.

[15] al-Munajjid, 2009, p. 47.

[16] As quoted in al-Munajjid, 2009, p. 47.

[17] Yasin, M.N., 1997, *Book of Emaan According to the Classical Works of Shaikul-Islam Ibn Taymiyyah*, London: Al-Firdous Ltd., pp. 184-186; al-Munajjid, 2009, pp. 19-43.

such as angels, revelation or divine inspiration. It is also used to signify the inner human nature or soul,[18] which is the constituent that gives life to the mind and body by spreading throughout the physical limbs. It drives the feelings, thoughts, behaviours, and volition of human beings. Its essence is different from that of the physical body, and once the soul is removed, the physical body ceases to function.

Nafs

Another term that is used more often in the Qur'an for the soul or psyche is *nafs* (pl. *anfus* or *nufoos*). This term actually has two meanings: the human soul and the self, depending on the context.[19] Sometimes it is used to refer to the soul or spirit, and at other times it refers to that which is associated with the body or the self. This interchangeable use of the term seems to emphasize the inherent connection between the soul and the self.

Karzoon, in Zarabozo, has defined the nafs in the following manner:

> It is something internal in the entity of a human whose exact nature is not perceived. It is ready to accept direction towards good or evil. It combines together a number of human attributes and characteristics that have a clear effect on human behavior.[20]

The majority of Muslim scholars maintain that the terms nafs and rooḥ are interchangeable. The main distinction is that usually, nafs refers to the soul when it is inside of the body, whereas rooḥ is used when the soul is separated or apart from the body. This may not always be the case, however, as is evident in several hadiths.[21] The

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[18] Ahmad, 1992, Qur'anic Concepts of Human Psyche. In Z. A. Ansari (Ed.) *Qur'anic Concepts of Human Psyche.* Islamabad, Pakistan: Islamic Research Institute Press, p. 25.

[19] Ahmad, 1992, p. 30.

[20] Zarabozo, 2002, p. 60.

[21] al-Kanadi, M., 1996, *Mysteries of the Soul Expounded*, Jeddah, Saudi=

following two hadiths refer to the rooḥ/nafs departing from the body at the time of death:

Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) said: «When the rooḥ is taken out, the eyesight follows it.» (recorded by Muslim)

Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) said: «Do you not see that when a person dies, his gaze is fixed intently? That occurs when his eyesight follows his nafs (as it comes out).» (recorded by Muslim)

These hadiths clearly indicate the interchangeable nature of the terms 'rooḥ' and 'nafs' in relation to the soul. The distinction between the ways the two are used is rather minute.

Al-Kanadi states the following regarding the soul, based upon the work of Ibn al-Qayyim:

> The spirit is an entity which differs from the physical, tangible body. It is a higher type of luminous (or light-like) being, alive and moving, and it penetrates the limbs, circulating through them as water circulates throughout the petals of a rose, as oil circulates throughout the olive and as fire circulates throughout the burning embers of coal. One may reasonably perceive the soul filling and occupying the body; its form, though non-physical, is molded into the body's shape.[22]

Mysteries of the soul

It is mentioned in the Qur'an that we only know a little about the mysteries of the soul. Allah (ﷻ) has chosen to keep much of the knowledge hidden from us for some divine purpose. He (ﷻ) says:

﴿And they ask you [O Muhammad], about the soul. Say: The soul is of the affair [concern] of my Lord. And you [humankind] have not been given of knowledge except a little.﴾ *(Qur'an 17: 85)*

=Arabia: Inheritors of Abu Bilal Mustafa al Kanadi, p. 10.

[22] al-Kanadi, 1996, p. 3, translating a passage from Ibn al-Qayyim, *Kitab ar-Ruh,* pp 249- 250.

This verse indicates that the capacity of humans to comprehend the true nature of the soul is limited. We will never be able to discover the secrets of the soul, of life and death, and what is beyond it. Science will never to be able to conquer this topic because the unseen world is outside the realm of scientific enquiry and methodology.

The rooḥ is from Allah (ﷻ) and is breathed into the human being. Allah (ﷻ) says:

﴿And when I have proportioned him and breathed into him of My [created] soul, then fall down to him in prostration.﴾ *(Qur'an 15: 29)*

He also says:

﴿Then He proportioned him and breathed into him from his [created] soul and made for you hearing, vision and hearts [meaning the intellect]; little are you grateful.﴾ *(Qur'an 32: 9)*

It is important to clarify that the rooḥ is the element of life and soul which Allah (ﷻ) created for the body; it is not His own spirit or even part of His spirit. It is of an essence unlike that of the physical body. Since it is created from a substance that does not have a comparison in the physical realm, it is not possible to describe its complete qualities.[23] We know from revelation that the soul ascends, descends, hears, sees, speaks, and so forth, but these actions are different from the physical characteristics that we know and understand.[24]

The soul spreads throughout the physical limbs and to every part of the body. It drives the physical body's feelings, movements and volition. When the soul is removed, life ends for the human. Ibn Taymiyah wrote:

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[23] al-Ashqar, U.S., 2002, *The Minor Resurrection (What Happens after Death) in the Light of the Qur'an and Sunnah*, Riyadh, Saudia Arabia: International Islamic Publishing House, p. 119.

[24] Ibid., p. 119.

> The *rooḥ* does not reside in any particular part of the body, rather it flows throughout the body just like the life which is the characteristic of the entire body. If life is dependent on the *rooḥ*, then when the *rooḥ* is in the body it is alive, and when the soul departs, life is over.[25]

The word *insân* is used to refer to the human being, both the body and the soul. The chapter of the Qur'an titled 'al-Insân' begins with the following verse:

﴿Has there [not] come upon the human a period of time when he was not a thing [even] mentioned?﴾ *(Qur'an 76: 1)*

Ibn Taymiyah stated:

> 'Insân' (human) is an expression which refers to both the body and the soul together; indeed, it applies more to the soul than to the body. The body is only a vehicle for the soul.[26]

Good and evil

We understand from revelation that humans are capable of both good and evil. The soul is not inherently evil, but it has the potential for evil, just as it has the potential for goodness. Goodness, in fact, is probably more prevalent due to the presence of the fiṭrah. The evil must be controlled, and the self freed from its influence, through the process of purification, as discussed below.

The inherent goodness of humankind is evident in the fact that even non-Muslims, who are astray from Allah's guidance and the straight path, continue to exhibit some element of goodness in their lives. If this were not the case, the world would be even more chaotic and destructive than it currently is (which may be hard to imagine). In

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[25] Ibid., p. 119.

[26] Ibn Taymiyah, Sharḥ aṭ-Ṭahâwiyah, p. 442, as quoted in al-Ashqar, 2002a, p. 126.

general, humans have developed moral codes, ethical codes and laws that provide frameworks for acceptable and unacceptable behaviour, and although these codes are often purported to be secular in nature, religion has most likely had some type of influence. Non-Muslims are rewarded for their good deeds, but their rewards are limited to the present life. They will have no share in the hereafter, as they have refused to believe in and worship Allah (ﷻ) as He should be believed in and worshipped.

Evil actually exists as a test from Allah (ﷻ). If Allah had created all of us with only the potential for goodness, in a world full of goodness, we all would have naturally obeyed and submitted to Allah. In that case, there would be no need for accountability or judgment, and everyone would attain the goal of paradise. Since Allah's plan is to test humans by distinguishing between those who submit to Him and those who refuse, evil temptations are a necessary part of the plan. These evil enticements are present in various forms in the environment as well as in our very own souls.

Levels of the soul

In general, the soul will be at one of three levels, or conditions, based upon the choices that are made: the commanding soul, the reproachful soul, or the tranquil soul. This does not mean that each person has three different souls; it means that there are different attributes or conditions that may apply to one soul, as explained below.

Commanding souls: This refers to the commanding souls that instigate people towards evil, as mentioned in the Qur'anic verse: ﴿...Indeed, the soul is a persistent enjoiner of evil, except those upon which my Lord has mercy...﴾ *(Qur'an 12: 53)*

This is the lower level of the soul, which inclines towards the physical world and seeks bodily desires and pleasures. The soul is

controlled by its whims and desires, such that it is disobedient and commits sins easily. If individuals allow these lowly aspects to take control, they begin to lose a sense of remorse for their sinful actions.[27] As they go down the path of sin, they lose the ability to perceive the truth. Evil takes over, and their hearts become hardened. Allah (ﷻ) says regarding them: ﴿No! Rather, the stain has covered their hearts of that which they were earning.﴾ *(Qur'an 83: 14)*

People like this have refused to accept the guidance from Allah (ﷻ) and to take Allah as their supporter. In this case, Allah (ﷻ) gives them another companion: Satan.

﴿And whoever is blinded from remembrance of the Most Merciful — we appoint for him a devil, and he is to him a companion. And indeed, they [the devils] avert them from the way [of guidance] while they think that they are [rightly] guided.﴾ *(Qur'an 43: 36-37)*

Satan will whisper to them and easily encourage them to do evil deeds. Since this soul is already inclined to those kinds of acts, they willingly obey.[28]

Reproachful soul: This is the self-reproaching soul that recognizes evil deeds, blames itself for wrongdoing and feels a sense of remorse. This soul also blames itself for not doing more good deeds.[29] Allah (ﷻ) mentions:

﴿And I swear by the reproaching soul [to the certainty of resurrection]﴾ *(Qur'an 75: 2)*

After recognizing their evil natures and the wrong done to their own souls, people with reproachful souls seek repentance from Allah and attempt to correct themselves.

﴿And those who, when they commit an immorality or wrong themselves [by transgression], remember Allah and seek forgiveness

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[27] Zarabozo, 2002, pp. 62-63.

[28] Zarabozo, 2002, p. 63.

[29] Ibid., pp. 66-67.

for their sins — and who can forgive sins except Allah? — and [who] do not persist in what they have done while they know.﴾

(Qur'an 3: 135)

These souls constantly waver between doing good and doing evil.[30]

Tranquil soul: As sincere faith becomes strong in a person's heart, the proclivity to evil within the soul becomes weak. The soul becomes completely dominated by inclinations towards piety and righteousness. It loves and desires goodness and detests evil deeds, so it rarely (if ever) responds to or complies with the urges to commit evil deeds.[31] This is the level of the tranquil soul.

﴿[To the righteous it will be said]: O reassured soul, return to your Lord, well-pleased and pleasing [to Him]. And enter among My [righteous] servants. And enter My paradise.﴾ *(Qur'an 89: 27-30)*

Goodness dominates, so the soul feels a sense of tranquillity and peace. These souls are obedient to Allah (ﷻ) and pleased with what He has decreed, relying upon Him alone in all matters.[32] Through this strong connection with the Creator, they calm their desires and passions, and they require little effort to repel evil inclinations. These individuals are in essence fulfilling the purpose of their creation, which is the worship and obedience of Allah. This is a level that is possible to achieve in this life, and it provides the believers with a taste of the joys awaiting them in the hereafter.

The heart

The Arabic term for heart, *qalb,* is mentioned many times in the Qur'an, either in reference to itself or to the chest that contains it. The root of the word 'qalb' refers to changing quickly and often. The

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[30] al-Ashqar, 2002a, p. 133.

[31] Zarabozo, 2002, pp. 67.

[32] Ibid., 2002, p. 68.

Prophet (ﷺ) said: «The heart (qalb) takes its name from its constant changes (*taqallub*). The heart is like a feather at the root of a tree, being turned over and over by the wind.» (a sound hadith recorded by Aḥmad) This changing of the heart is related to its level of eemân or faith.

In the Islamic framework, the heart is associated with more than mere affection and emotions. It is also the seat of intellectual and cognitive faculties and understanding, volition and intention.[33] It is a 'super-sensory organ' that is cognizant of metaphysical truths. The heart is connected to the soul as an integral component, although the exact nature of this connection is unknown.

As mentioned, the heart is capable of both emotion and reasoning. The heart's capacity to reason and understand is expressed in several Qur'anic verses:

﴿So have they not travelled through the earth and have hearts by which to reason and ears by which to hear? For indeed, it is not eyes that are blinded, but blinded are the hearts which are within the breasts.﴾ *(Qur'an 22: 46)*

﴿And We have certainly created for hell many of the jinn and humankind. They have hearts with which they do not understand, they have eyes with which they do not see, and they have ears with which they do not hear. Those are like livestock; rather, they are more astray. It is they who are the heedless.﴾ *(Qur'an 7: 179)*

﴿Then He proportioned him and breathed into him from His (created) soul and made for you hearing and vision and hearts [meaning intellect]; little are you grateful.﴾ *(Qur'an 32: 9)*

The Prophet (ﷺ) said: «...In the body, there is a morsel of flesh which, if it is sound, all the body is sound and which, if it is diseased, all of the body is diseased. This part of the body is the heart.» (recorded by Bukhari and Muslim)

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[33] Haque, 2004, p. 48.

The heart plays a significant role in human psychology, as highlighted in this hadith. It is not merely a physical organ that pumps blood throughout the body; it also has a prominent spiritual role. If the heart is sound, the rest of the body will be sound, and the actions of the body will be pure. A heart that is diseased will lead to a diseased body and unhealthy actions.

Unfortunately, in our current times, Muslims have lost the understanding of the importance of the role of the heart. The focus is generally on actions or beliefs, with little mention of emotion. In reality, however, the acceptance of our deeds by Allah (ﷻ) is dependent upon the state of our hearts. We may pray, fast and perform other obligatory duties, but if the heart does not intend these actions for the sake of Allah (ﷻ), or it is inattentive during the process, our deeds may not be accepted at all. In fact, they may be counted against us if the desire of the heart is directed towards some other goal, such as recognition from others. This is probably one of the main reasons that Sufism is so appealing to the masses, as it focuses on this emotional aspect (usually to the detriment of beliefs and actions). Regarding the heart, Zarabozo states:

> The rest of the limbs are subservient to and obey the heart. The heart is the commander and the limbs are the soldiers. Therefore, if the heart is good, the 'soldiers' and their acts are good and if the heart is evil, the 'soldiers' and their acts are evil. If the heart is completely pure it will contain only love for Allah, love for the things that Allah loves, fear of Allah and fear of engaging in something that Allah hates. Such a heart will abstain from all of the forbidden acts and will also abstain from the ambiguous matters out of fear that they are forbidden. If the heart is greatly evil it will follow its own desires and it will perform the acts that it loves regardless of whether Allah loves those acts or not.[34]

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[34] Zarabozo, J., 1999*, Commentary on the Forty Hadith of al-Nawawi*, Denver, CO: Al Basheer Company for Publications and Translations, Vol. 1, pp. 469-470.

Allah knows the secrets of the heart

Whether people reveal what is in their hearts or attempt to conceal it, Allah (ﷻ) knows every minute detail. This fact is mentioned several times throughout the Qur'an to remind human beings of this reality so that they may correct their intentions and their behaviour.

﴿Say: Whether you conceal what is in your breasts or reveal it, Allah knows it...﴾ *(Qur'an 3: 29)*

﴿Indeed, Allah is knower of the unseen [aspects] of the heavens and earth. Indeed, He is knowing of that within the breasts.﴾ *(Qur'an 35: 38)*

﴿And conceal your speech or publicize it; indeed, He is knowing of that within the breasts. Does He who created not know, while He is the Subtle, the Acquainted?﴾ *(Qur'an 67: 13-14)*

﴿And We have already created man and know what his soul whispers to him, and We are closer to him than [his] jugular vein.﴾ *(Qur'an 50: 16)*

The closeness in this verse refers to having absolute knowledge of everything about the human being.

Types of hearts

Since the heart is connected to the soul, it also has three types, which are similar to the descriptions of the levels of the soul. These types are the healthy heart, the dead heart, and the sick or defective heart. If the heart is good, the actions of the person will be good; if the heart is evil, the actions will be evil.

The healthy heart

The healthy heart is free from any desires that oppose the command of Allah (ﷻ) and from any doubts that contradict what He reveals. It submits completely and relies on Allah (ﷻ) alone. This

type of heart is living, humble and gentle.[35] It is a pure heart that has only love for and fear of Allah (ﷻ). It loves those things that Allah (ﷻ) loves, and hates that which He hates.

On the Day of Judgment, the only heart that will be of benefit is the sound and submissive heart. Allah (ﷻ) says:

﴿The Day when there will not benefit [anyone] wealth or children, but only one who comes to Allah with a sound heart.﴾

(Qur'an 26: 88-89)

The Prophet (ﷺ) used to supplicate for a clean heart. He said: «O Allah! Make the distance between me and my sins as great as You have made the east far from the west, cleanse (my heart) from all sins as a white garment is cleansed from filth, and wash away my sins with water, snow and hail.» (recorded by Bukhari and Muslim)

The healthy heart finds peace and comfort in the remembrance of Allah.

﴿O people, there has come to you instruction from your Lord, and healing for what is in the breasts — and guidance and mercy for the believers.﴾ *(Qur'an 10: 57)*

﴿Those who have believed and whose hearts are assured by the remembrance of Allah. Unquestionably, by the remembrance of Allah, hearts are assured.﴾ *(Qur'an 13: 28)*

﴿Allah has sent down the best statement: a consistent book wherein is reiteration. The skins shiver therefrom of those who fear their Lord; then their skins and their hearts relax at the remembrance of Allah. That is the guidance of Allah by which He guides whom He wills...﴾

(Qur'an 39: 23)

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[35] Ibn Taymiyyah, 1998, *Diseases of the Hearts and their Cures,* Birmingham, U.K: Al Hidaayah Publishing and Distribution, p. 11.

The dead heart

The dead heart is ignorant of its Creator, neither knowing its Lord nor worshipping Him. It follows its whims and desires and is immersed in worldly pleasures. It will follow its own desires and engage in acts that it loves, regardless of whether Allah (ﷻ) loves those acts or not. This is the dreary and harsh heart.[36] When it hears mention of Allah (ﷻ) or the Qur'an, this type of heart reacts with aversion.

﴿And when Allah is mentioned alone, the hearts of those who do not believe in the hereafter shrink with aversion, but when those [worshipped] other than Him are mentioned, immediately they rejoice.﴾ *(Qur'an 39: 45)*

Those who reject guidance have hearts that are blind and deaf; their faculties of reason and perception are dead. When a person sins, the heart is marked or stained. Repentance and forgiveness may wash the stain away, but if the person does not repent, the stain deepens and spreads more. Eventually the heart is sealed, and the person dies spiritually.

﴿No! Rather, the stain has covered their hearts of that which they were earning.﴾ *(Qur'an 83: 14)*

﴿Allah has set a seal upon their hearts and upon their hearing, and over their vision is a veil...﴾ *(Qur'an 2: 7)*

The Qur'an presents an analogy for this type of heart:

﴿Then your hearts became hardened after that, being like stones or even harder. For indeed, there are stones from which rivers burst forth, and there are some of them that split open and water comes out, and there are some of them that fall down for fear of Allah. And Allah is not unaware of what you do.﴾ *(Qur'an 2: 74)*

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[36] Ibid., p. 11.

This verse pertains to the Children of Israel, who defied Allah (ﷻ) and refused to submit to Him. Their hearts became harder than stone and subsequently were closed to any form of guidance.

The sick heart

The third type, the sick heart, is between the first two kinds of hearts. It has some life, but is also defective. It contains love of Allah (ﷻ) and faith and trust in Him, but at the same time, it harbours a love of vain desires and the material world. There is a continuous wavering between these two conditions of safety and destruction.[37] If a person engages in prohibited or doubtful matters, the heart becomes weaker and open to further attacks and disease. This may lead it to eventually become a dead heart if efforts are not made to purify it.

Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyah described these three hearts as such:

> Hearts [in fact] are of three [types]. [The first] is the one devoid of faith and devoid of all good. With such a benighted heart, the devil relaxes his whisperings, for he has already taken residence in this heart, a territory for him to rule as he pleases — in complete control.
>
> The second type is the heart illuminated by faith. Lamps are lit therein, but the shadows of passions and impulses remain. In this heart, the devil sometimes finds a welcome, sometimes rejection; but it is a territory he yearns for. The war waxes and wanes. People of this kind vary greatly: among some the devil usually wins; among others he is usually defeated; among others still he sometimes [wins] and sometimes [loses].
>
> The third type is the heart brimming with faith, illumined by its lights, and the heart [of one] from whom the veils of passion have been lifted and shadows dispelled — so light shines forth in his breast. In that kindled glow, distractions are burnt up when

[37] Ibid., p. 11.

they approach. This heart is like the firmament protected by stars: when a devil approaches, a meteor is cast down and he is burnt up. Surely no heaven is more sacrosanct than the believer. Allah protects him even more than He does the heavens. For while the heavens are the temple of the angels, the repository of revelation, the place where the lights of obedience shine forth, the believer's heart is the repository of *tawḥeed*, the love of Allah and gnosis. It is where the lights of faith shine on. It deserves to be guarded and protected from the plots of the foe, who will obtain nothing of it save through deceit and in moments of negligence.[38]

Signs of a sound heart

There are some signs that indicate whether or not the heart is pure and sound. The distinguishing characteristic is that the healthy heart is not inclined to this world, but instead is attached to Allah (ﷻ) and the hereafter. The signs include:[39]

1. Considering oneself as belonging to the next world and not this world; eager to reach the hereafter.
2. Being upset after committing a sin, until repentance is complete.
3. Feeling unhappy and discontent at missing daily recitation of Qur'an or remembering Allah (ﷻ) through praising and supplicating to Him.
4. Finding the pleasure of worshipping Allah (ﷻ) more satisfying than any other pleasure.
5. Finding that worldly worries and concerns are absent when in a state of prayer.

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[38] al-Jawziyah, 2000, p. 31.

[39] Zarabozo, 1999, pp. 471-2.

6. Being worried and concerned, above all else, with acting for the sake of Allah (ﷻ).
7. Being more concerned with the correctness of a deed than with its performance.
8. Trying to use every moment wisely instead of wasting time.

Signs of a diseased heart

There are other signs that indicate that a person's heart is diseased or impure. These include:[40]

1. Not feeling hurt or pain when committing sins.
2. Finding pleasure in committing acts of disobedience to Allah (ﷻ).
3. Showing concern about less important matters while neglecting more important ones.
4. Disliking the truth and having difficulty accepting or submitting to it.
5. Feeling discomfort among righteous believers, but contentment among misguided people, sinners or even evildoers.
6. Being susceptible to misconceptions and doubts; being attracted to discussions and debates related to misconceptions rather than to reading Qur'an and more beneficial deeds.
7. Not being affected by admonition.

Poisons of the heart

All acts of disobedience are poison for the heart and lead to its sickness, but there are four in particular that are more widespread and

[40] Zarabozo, 1999, pp. 472-3.

have the strongest negative impact upon the functioning of the heart: unnecessary and harmful speech, unrestrained glances, overindulgence in food, and bad company.[41] The first three of these will be discussed below, while the fourth will be covered in the chapter on social relations.

Unnecessary and harmful speech

Many people often forget that they will be held accountable for their speech as well as their behaviour. For this reason, the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) told us: «A slave may utter a word without considering its consequences, and it will cause him to fall into the fire, as far as the distance between the east and the west.» (recorded by Muslim)

«A slave (of Allah) may utter a word which pleases Allah, without giving it much importance, and because of that Allah will raise his or her ranks (of reward); a slave (of Allah) may utter a word (carelessly) which displeases Allah, without thinking of its gravity, and because of that, he or she will be thrown into the hellfire.» (recorded by Bukhari)

«Whoever can guarantee (the chastity of) what is between his two jawbones (meaning his mouth and tongue) and what is between his two legs (meaning his private parts), I will guarantee paradise for him.» (recorded by Bukhari)

Guarding the mouth and tongue entails protecting them from unlawful speech such as lying, backbiting, slandering, cursing, quarrelling and the like. This also includes abstaining from unlawful food and drink. The tongue is easily and quickly moved, which is the reason the Prophet (ﷺ) reminded his followers regarding it. Once words are spoken, they may cause extreme harm, which can be

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[41] Farid, A., (Ed.), 1993, *The Purification of the Soul (Works of al-Hanbali, al Jawziyya, al-Ghazali),* London, U.K: Al Firdous Ltd, p. 23.

difficult to remedy. It is much easier to restrain the tongue in the first place, rather than deal with the consequences.

Unrestrained glances

In relation to modesty and protecting the private parts, Allah (ﷻ) mentions the commandment to lower the gaze and avert it from anything that is unlawful:

﴿Tell the believing men to restrain their glances and guard their private parts. That is purer for them. Indeed, Allah is acquainted with what they do. And tell the believing women to restrain their glances and guard their private parts and not expose their adornment...﴾

(Qur'an 24: 30-31)

The believer should only look at what is permissible. If a person's gaze unintentionally falls upon something forbidden, he or she should look away immediately. The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said: «Beware of sitting in the streets. They said: O Messenger of Allah, we have no alternative but to sit in the streets to converse with one another. The Messenger said: If you insist, then give the street its rights. They asked: What are the rights of the street, O Messenger of Allah? He said: Lower your gaze, return the greeting (the Islamic greeting of peace), enjoin what is good and forbid what is evil.» (recorded by Bukhari and Muslim)

The Prophet (ﷺ) also said: «Guarantee me six things and I will guarantee you paradise: when any of you speaks, he should not lie; if he is entrusted with something, he should not betray that trust; if he makes a promise, he should not break it; lower your gaze; restrain your hands; and protect your private parts.» (a reliable hadith recorded by Aḥmad and Ibn Ḥibbân)

Gazing at things that are unlawful may provoke the heart to evil such as attraction and desires, which may then lead a person towards forbidden behaviour in order to fulfil them. Farid mentions in his compiled book on purification of the soul:

> *Shaytan* (Satan) enters with the glance, for he travels with it, faster than the wind blowing through an empty place. He makes what is seen appear more beautiful than it really is, and transforms it into an idol for the heart to worship. Then he promises it false rewards, lights the fire of desires within it, and fuels it with the wood of forbidden actions, which the servant would not have committed had it not been for this distorted image.[42]

The Prophet (ﷺ) confirmed the connection between the gaze of the eyes and the private parts when he said: «The son of Adam has his share of fornication decreed for him, and he will commit that which has been decreed. The fornication of the eyes is looking; the fornication of the tongue is speaking; the fornication of the ears is listening; the fornication of the hands is striking; and the fornication of the feet is walking. The soul wishes and desires, and the private parts confirm or deny that.» (recorded by Muslim)

Falling into these traps distracts the heart and leads one to forget more important matters, such as remembrance and obedience of Allah. It may also lead the heart to become blind due to disobedience, which makes it unable to distinguish truth from falsehood.

Overindulgence in food

The believer is instructed in both the Qur'an and the Sunnah to avoid excess in food and drink. Allah (ﷻ) says:

﴿...Eat and drink, but be not excessive. Indeed, He likes not those who commit excess.﴾ *(Qur'an 7: 31)*,

The Prophet (ﷺ) said: «A human does not fill any container worse than his stomach. It is enough for him to have some morsels to strengthen his back (keep his back straight). If he must eat more, then

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[42] Ibid., p. 27.

it should be one-third of his stomach for food, one-third for drink and one-third for breathing.» (a sound hadith recorded by at-Tirmidhi and Ibn Mâjah)

Excess in eating leads to laziness in fulfilling obligatory duties such as prayer, as well as other recommended acts. It increases the likelihood of disobedience by instigating desires and reducing self-control. A person is more likely to become angry, for example, after having overindulged. The mind also functions less effectively on a full stomach, and this has been confirmed by scientific research. When the stomach is full, more blood goes to that area to process the food, leaving less blood available for the brain.

Effects of sins upon the heart and soul

Sins have a harmful effect upon the heart and the soul, with the degree of damage depending upon the severity of the sin. The Hadith and the Qur'an describe the sinner's heart: «When a believer sins, there is a black spot on his heart. If he repents and asks pardon, his heart is polished, but if he does more, it increases until it gains the ascendancy over his heart.» (a reliable hadith recorded by at-Tirmidhi)

That is the rust or stain mentioned by Allah, Most High:

﴿No! Rather, the stain has covered their hearts of that which they were earning.﴾ *(Qur'an 83: 14)*

Sins weaken the determination and the power of the heart to obey Allah (ﷻ), while they strengthen the resolve to commit more sins. The desire for repentance is gradually weakened until it is completely removed from the heart.[43] In this way, sins either inflict the heart with a disease or lead to its complete death. When a person

[43] al-Jawziyyah, I. Q., 2006, *Spiritual Disease and its Cure,* London, UK: Al-Firdous Ltd., p. 74.

persistently engages in wrongdoing, his or her heart becomes sealed. The rust increases to such an extent that it completely encases the heart. Once the heart breaks its connection with Allah, it becomes more difficult to return or bring it back to a purer state, in the same way that it is difficult to remove rust from a physical object.

According to a sound hadith recorded by Bukhari and Abu Dâwood, some of the diseases from which the Prophet (ﷺ) sought refuge in Allah included: worry and grief, inability and laziness, cowardice and miserliness, burden of debts and being overpowered by other people. When the heart is occupied with a disconcerting matter relating to the future, it leads to worry; if the heart is concerned with a matter from the past, it causes grief. If a person neglects aspects which lead to achievement, and this is due to his or her incapacity, then it results in inability. If this is due to a lack of willpower, it is due to laziness. If there is a lack of benefit due to a cause in the body, it is cowardice; if it is because of wealth, it leads to miserliness. When others act in a superior manner towards a person with justification, it is due to the heavy burden of debt; if it is not justified, it is because of some people overpowering or oppressing others.[44]

Another effect of sin is the deprivation of knowledge. Sin extinguishes the light of knowledge and corrupts the mind by smothering and blocking its insight. Even if the truth is presented to these people, they are unable to perceive it due to the darkness that surrounds them. They will be submerged in the confusion of disbelief, innovation and misguidance.

The hearts of the sinners are constantly in a state of worry and anxiety. There is a sense of isolation from Allah (ﷻ) and from other people, particularly from righteous people. This isolation increases until they are unable to benefit from knowledgeable people and are completely surrounded by workers of Satan.

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[44] Ibid., pp. 100-101.

All of the evil and harm experienced in this world and in the hereafter is due to their own sins and transgression.[45] Allah (ﷻ) says:

﴿And whatever strikes you of disaster — it is for what your hands have earned, but He pardons much.﴾ *(Qur'an 42: 30)*

He also mentions, regarding the punishment of the disbelievers in the hereafter:

﴿That is for what your hands have put forth [of evil] and because Allah is never unjust to His servants.﴾ *(Qur'an 8: 51)*

Another effect of sinning is the removal of the blessings and protection of Allah (ﷻ). 'Abdullâh ibn 'Umar (رضي الله عنه) narrated that the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) supplicated with these words: «O Allah, I seek refuge with You from the withdrawal of Your blessing and the change of Your protection (from me) and from Your sudden wrath, and from every displeasure of Yours.» (recorded by Muslim)

Purification of the soul

Allah created humans with the potential for both good and evil. The task set before all humans is to determine which of these characteristics they will support and develop, and which they will attempt to control or eliminate. The successful ones are those who purify their souls and follow the inclinations towards goodness. Allah (ﷻ) says:

﴿And [by] the soul, and He who proportioned it and inspired it [with discernment of] its wickedness and its righteousness. He has succeeded who purifies it, and he has failed who instils it [with corruption].﴾ *(Qur'an 91: 7-10)*

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[45] Ibid., pp. 57-58.

In essence, there are two paths in life: One path is to follow the guidance from Allah and develop noble and good characteristics. This is the path of purification of the soul and the path of moderation and balance. The other path is the path of corruption, by which the individuals reject guidance from Allah (ﷻ) and allow lowly desires of the self to corrupt them.

If people develop their righteous qualities and utilize them in their lives, they will be following the correct path. They will become some of the noblest of creation and some of the most pleasing to Allah (ﷻ). As they fulfil this natural inclination, there will be no distress or conflict in their personalities. They can attain good mental and emotional health by restraining the negative attributes of the nafs, such as jealousy, greed and anger.

If, on the other hand, they reject guidance from Allah and allow their base desires to control them, this will lead them to destruction. They will become evil and corrupt and will experience a state of mental conflict and anguish. Allah (ﷻ) mentions in the Qur'an that individuals only harm themselves in this manner:

﴿...Whoever transgresses the limits of Allah has certainly wronged himself [nafs]...﴾ *(Qur'an 65: 1)*

﴿Whoever does righteousness — it is for his own soul; and whoever does evil [does so] against it...﴾ *(Qur'an 41: 46)*

﴿And We did not wrong them, but they wronged themselves...﴾ *(Qur'an 11: 101)*

The path to the fire is easy, since the lower desires and passions are easily inflamed and pleasurable for the human. The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said: «The fire is surrounded by all kinds of desires and passions, while paradise is surrounded by all kinds of disliked, undesirable things.» (recorded by Bukhari)

The path to paradise is more challenging; it requires self-control, perseverance, and other virtues.

Success and salvation in this life (and the next) come from purifying the soul by bringing out what is best in it and minimizing, or completely eradicating, its evils. Human beings attempt to eliminate unbelief, polytheism, hypocrisy, various sins and evil from the soul and to fill it with correct beliefs, virtuous characteristics and good deeds.[46] This process continues until the individuals achieve the level at which they worship Allah as if they see Him and they are aware that He sees them, since He is All-Seeing. This is the ultimate level that can be achieved in this life. The soul can be purified through acts of worship such as prayer, fasting and charity. Purification is also achieved by obeying the commands of Allah, avoiding what is prohibited, and being conscious of Allah at all times (having *taqwâ*).

Purification of the soul obviously implies purification of the heart, which is attained by love and fear of Allah (ﷻ) and submission to His commands. Zarabozo explains:

> And the heart cannot become purified until the person knows Allah, extols Him, loves Him, fears Him, has hope in Him and trusts Him and his heart is filled with these attributes. This is the true realization of the statement, 'There is no God except Allah.' The heart will not become pure until it loves, extols, deifies, fears and submits to no one except Allah. And...if the heart is pure, the limbs will follow and make the actions of the person pure as well.[47]

Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyah stated that purity of the heart is achieved by being free of five things:

> polytheism, which contradicts the concept of the Oneness of Allah; innovation in religion, which contradicts the Sunnah of the Prophet (ﷺ); desire, which contradicts the commandments

[46] Zarabozo, 2002, p. 79.

[47] Zarabozo, 1999, p. 470.

of Allah; heedlessness, which contradicts the remembrance of Allah; and passion, which contradicts sincerity.[48]

Free will and accountability

Several verses in the Qur'an indicate that humans have free will to make choices in regard to their beliefs and deeds. This is an honour that Allah (ﷻ) bestowed upon humankind, and it sets us apart from the angels. As has already been mentioned, this free will is not absolute; it has limits.

﴿And say: The truth is from your Lord, so whosoever wills — let him believe; and whosoever wills — let him disbelieve...﴾

(Qur'an 18: 29)

﴿Indeed, We guided him to the way, be he grateful or ungrateful.﴾

(Qur'an 76: 3)

There is no compulsion in religion. An individual can never be forced to submit to Allah (ﷻ) and His commandments; he or she must freely choose to do so. Outward demonstrations of submission are worthless if the heart has not surrendered.

﴿There shall be no compulsion in [acceptance of] the religion. The right course has become clear from the wrong. So whoever disbelieves in false objects of worship and believes in Allah has grasped the most trustworthy handhold with no break in it. And Allah is Hearing and Knowing.﴾ *(Qur'an 2: 256)*

Allah (ﷻ) mentions that some people believe and do righteous deeds, by their own free will and choice, and then enter paradise; others disbelieve and do evil deeds, by their own free will and choice, and then enter hell.

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[48] al-Jawziyyah, 2006, p. 148.

﴿That day, the people will depart separated [into categories] to be shown [the result of] their deeds. So whoever does an atom's weight of good will see it, and whoever does an atom's weight of evil will see it.﴾ *(Qur'an 99: 6-8)*

﴿...And they will be called: This is paradise, which you have been made to inherit for what you used to do.﴾ *(Qur'an 7: 43)*

﴿So taste [punishment] because you forgot the meeting of this, your day; indeed, We have [accordingly] forgotten you. And taste the punishment of eternity for what you used to do.﴾ *(Qur'an 32: 14)*

Allah bestowed upon humans the ability to think and to reason. This ability is necessary for accountability, because they could not be responsible for their behaviour or choices if they had no capacity to reason or to distinguish between good and evil. In that case, it would be unjust to hold them accountable for their decisions, and Allah (ﷻ) is never unjust.

Another important element is knowledge. Knowledge is strongly emphasized in Islam; it enables us to distinguish between good and evil, right and wrong, lawful and unlawful. Without knowledge, we would find ourselves in a complicated maze, attempting to find the correct path. Out of Allah's mercy, He blessed us, through revelation, with the essential information that we need to discover our way easily and clearly. Knowledge is truly one of Allah's greatest blessings. With this knowledge and the ability to reason, we are capable of freely deciding which path to follow.

As discussed earlier, the will of a human being is connected to the will of Allah (ﷻ); nothing happens by the will of the individual alone. Only that which is destined by Allah will transpire. As He (ﷻ) says:

﴿Indeed, this is a reminder, so he who wills may take to his Lord a way. And you do not will except that Allah wills. Indeed, Allah is ever Knowing and Wise. He admits whom He wills into His mercy...﴾ *(Qur'an 76: 29-31)*

Free will, accountability, and divine decree (qadr)

We will not be held accountable for that which has been decreed for us that we had no control over, but we will be answerable for the choices that we make and what we earn. We are not commanded to do that which Allah has decreed for us; rather we are commanded to do that which is enjoined upon us. There is a difference between what Allah wills for us and what He wants from us. What He wills for us, He has kept secret, but what He wants from us He has commanded us to do.

The fact that Allah (ﷻ) knows what we will do from now until our death, and that this has been written in a book, is not an excuse for us to avoid responsibility. The fact that Allah, in His all-encompassing knowledge, knows what His creation will do, does not imply any form of compulsion. *Qadr* (divine predestination or destiny) may be cited when calamities or trials occur such as poverty, poor health, death of a loved one, loss of wealth, and so forth. When believers are patient and accept these calamities as coming from Allah and His decree, this signifies true faith. Qadr, however, cannot justify the mistakes or sins of individuals; for those, the sinners should seek forgiveness from Allah (ﷻ).

Allah says:

﴿So be patient [O Muhammad]. Indeed, the promise of Allah is true. Ask forgiveness for your sin [fault] and exalt [Allah] with praise of your Lord in the evening and the morning.﴾ *(Qur'an 40: 55)*

While this verse was directed to the Prophet (ﷺ), it implies that all believers should seek forgiveness for their sins. Prophets may make errors in judgment, but they have been protected by Allah from committing sins.

The general conceptualization, then, is that people cannot use qadr as an excuse for the things that they do and the choices that they

make. In the case of that which is beyond their abilities to control, they may attribute it to qadr. Even in the hereafter, the disbelievers will admit their sins and be unable to produce any type of excuse.

﴿And for those who disbelieved in their Lord is the punishment of hell, and wretched is the destination. When they are thrown into it, they hear from it a [dreadful] inhaling while it boils up. It almost bursts with rage. Every time a company is thrown into it, its keepers ask them: Did there not come to you a warner? They will say: Yes, a warner had come to us, but we denied and said: Allah has not sent down anything; You are not but in great error. And they will say: If only we had been listening or reasoning, we would not be among the companions of the blaze. And they will admit their sin, so [it is] alienation for the companions of the blaze.﴾ *(Qur'an 67: 6-11)*

It is unacceptable to use qadr as an excuse for committing sins or failing to perform obligatory deeds. This would imply that the laws of Allah are meaningless and that the judgment, rewards and punishments should not happen or are unjust. This is obviously not true of the mercy and justice of Allah.

The polytheists use qadr as an excuse for their associating partners with Allah. They argue that if Allah had wanted them to obey Him, He would have willed it, implying that He willed their disobedience. If their excuse was legitimate or defensible, Allah would not punish them.

﴿Those who associated with Allah will say: If Allah had willed, we would not have associated [anything] and neither would our fathers, nor would we have prohibited anything. Likewise did those before deny until they tasted our punishment. Say: Do you have any knowledge that you can produce for us? You follow not except assumption, and you are not but falsifying. Say: With Allah is the far-reaching [conclusive] argument. If He had willed, He would have guided you all.﴾ *(Qur'an 6: 148-149)*

If qadr were a valid excuse for sins, disobedience and immorality, the people of hell would use it when they see the punishment before them and realize the nature of their final destiny. Allah tells us that in fact they will not use it as an excuse; instead they will say:

﴿...Our Lord, delay us for a short term; we will answer Your call and follow the messengers...﴾ *(Qur'an 14: 44)*

﴿But those whose scales are light — those are the ones who have lost their souls, [being] in hell, abiding eternally. The fire will sear their faces, and they therein will have taut smiles. [It will be said]: Were not My verses recited to you and you used to deny them? They will say: Our Lord, our wretchedness overcame us, and we were a people astray. Our Lord, remove us from it, and if we were to return [to evil], we would indeed be wrongdoers.﴾ *(Qur'an 23: 103-107)*

The duty of the prophets and messengers was to warn and advise their people and to establish evidence against those who refused to accept or follow the guidance. Their mission was only to convey the message and to warn of a harsh punishment for those who reject it. The disbelievers then would have no excuse on the Day of Judgment to justify their disobedience to Allah. If qadr were an acceptable excuse for committing sins, definitive proof would not have been established by the messengers. In fact, there would have been no real purpose in sending them in the first place.

﴿[We sent] messengers as bringers of good tidings and warners so that people will have no argument against Allah after the messengers. And ever is Allah exalted in might and Wise.﴾ *(Qur'an 4: 165)*

﴿Say: Obey Allah and obey the Messenger, but if you turn away — then upon him is only that [duty] with which he has been charged, and upon you is that with which you have been charged. And if you obey him, you will be [rightly] guided. And there is not upon the Messenger except the [responsibility for] clear notification.﴾ *(Qur'an 24: 54)*

The importance of intention

The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said: «Surely, all actions are but driven by intentions and, verily, every man shall have but that which he intended. Thus, he whose migration was for Allah and His Messenger, (then) his migration was for Allah and His Messenger; and he whose migration was to achieve some worldly benefit or to take a woman in marriage, his migration was for that for which he migrated.» (recorded by Bukhari and Muslim)

This is one of the most comprehensive hadiths of the Prophet (ﷺ). It applies to almost every rational action of the human being, including both speech and actions of the body, and both obligatory and voluntary deeds.

Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyah defined intentions as people's knowing what they are doing and knowing the purpose behind the action. Intelligent, deliberate actors do not do anything without first formulating it and desiring it.[49] This intention involves a purpose, resolve and determination to do something, and the individuals will do it as long as there is nothing to prevent them from doing it, and as long as their intention does not change.[50] Note that the place of intention is in the heart, not on the tongue.

Intentions fall into one of three categories: good, pious intentions; religiously neutral intentions; and evil intentions. As noted in the hadith, people shall get only what they intended. If they intended good, the result will be good; if they intended evil, they will obtain an evil result.[51] Their intention is what sets believers apart from disbelievers, and pious persons apart from sinners. Two people may do exactly the same deed, but the outcomes may be completely

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[49] Sadlan, *al-Niyyah* (pp. 98-99) as quoted in Zarabozo, 1999, p. 123.

[50] Zarabozo, 1999, p. 123.

[51] Ibid., p. 136.

opposite, due to their different intentions. The same type of act may be rewarded or punished by Allah (ﷻ), according to what is contained in the hearts.

Allah (ﷻ) only accepts and rewards deeds that are done sincerely for His sake. In fact, any deed performed with the sole intention of pleasing Allah, which is also in conformity with His Sharia, is considered an act of worship. This may even apply to acts that are merely permissible, if the person knew the act was permissible and performed it as a means of getting closer to Allah. Ibn al-Qayyim mentioned that the most exclusive faction of people who obtain nearness to Allah are those who alter the nature of their permissible deeds into acts of obedience to Allah. For those who truly know Allah, even the most routine and mundane deeds of life become acts of worship; while for the masses, even the ritual acts of worship become routine.[52]

Intention is a deed that all responsible persons are capable of performing. We should take the steps necessary to purify our intentions, to be sincere to Allah (ﷻ) and to seek His pleasure. We should follow the means that will bring us closer to Allah through rituals, reflecting on His creation and blessings, and comprehending His attributes; doing this will lead us to be more obedient and more sincere to Him. It will become easy for us to desire what Allah commands us to perform, and to avoid what He prohibits. The soul will automatically guide us to perform those deeds that are most pleasing to Allah.[53]

This is a significant endeavour for each human being, and it must become the goal and purpose of our existence. Allah (ﷻ) says:

﴿And I did not create the jinn and humankind except to worship Me [alone].﴾ *(Qur'an 51: 56)*

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[52] Ibid., p. 147.

[53] Ibid., p. 152.

Purity of intention is the distinguishing feature between worshipping Allah (ﷻ) correctly and worshipping Him incorrectly or not at all. It differentiates worship of Allah alone (tawḥeed) from worship of something along with Allah (shirk).[54]

Conclusions regarding the nature of humans

In summary, we can say that humans have certain features that set them apart from the rest of Allah's creation. These include the following:

1. A soul that is pure at birth and has the potential for good or evil
2. A natural disposition to believe in Allah (ﷻ) and to worship Him alone
3. The ability to think and comprehend, using the mind and intellect that Allah (ﷻ) has provided
4. Free will to choose between the path of righteousness and the path of evil, along with limited free will to carry out the choice that is made
5. Responsibility for their choices, which is related to the free will and ability.[55]

[54] Ibid., p. 156.

[55] Zarabozo, 2002, p. 110.

CHAPTER THREE

Personality

Personality is generally defined as enduring patterns of perceiving, relating to, and thinking about the environment and oneself. We generally react to and deal with the world and those around us in a consistent and unique manner. As distinct as each of us is in our physical features, we are equally unique in our personalities.

Character traits

Personality traits are prominent aspects of personality that are exhibited in a wide range of social contexts. They are characteristic ways in which the person interacts with the world. These traits make up our personality.

Research within psychology has only recently confirmed what Allah, the All-Compassionate, All-Merciful revealed to us in the Qur'an. There is evidence to indicate that each of us is born with a distinct, unique temperament, which influences many aspects of our developing personality. Temperament is seen as: "Relatively consistent, basic dispositions inherent in the person that underlie and modulate the expression of activity, reactivity, emotionality, and

sociability."[1] It has its origins in the genetic codes that guide the development of the brain, and elements of it are apparent from birth. Within a few months after birth, temperamental individuality is clearly established. This character then influences a person's reactions to, and interactions with, the environment. The environment may have an impact upon the personality as well.

Allah indicates this natural, inherent characteristic of humans in this verse:

﴿He [Moses] said: Our Lord is He who gave each thing its form and then guided [it].﴾ *(Qur'an 20: 50)*

Although the word 'form' may refer to those aspects that are common to humans, it also applies to traits that differ from one individual to the next. This adds to the diversity in experience and is part of Allah's plan in creation. For example, some people may be more extroverted, preferring social connections, while others may be more introverted or reserved.

While certain aspects of personality are genetic, experience and the choices that we make also shape who we are. As mentioned earlier, Allah (ﷻ) created humans with the potential for both good and evil. The test for every human being is to choose which of these characteristics we will support and develop, and which we will attempt to control or eliminate.[2] Allah (ﷻ) says:

﴿And [by] the soul and He who proportioned it, and inspired it [with discernment of] its wickedness and its righteousness. He has succeeded who purifies it, and he has failed who instils it [with corruption].﴾ *(Qur'an 91: 7-10)*

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[1] Eder, R. A. & Mangelsdorf, S. C., 1997, Basis of Early Personality Development: Implications for the Emergent Self-Concept, in Hogan, R., Johnson, J. A., & Briggs, S. R. (Eds.), *Handbook of Personality Psychology*, San Diego, CA: Academic Press, p. 210.

[2] Zarabozo, 2002, p. 60.

The choices that we make will be reflected in our behaviour, thoughts, and emotions.

This verse suggests that it is possible for the personality of an individual to be changed or adapted, preferably towards the path of goodness. Human beings are not simply 'victims' of genes or environment, but instead are freely acting agents who can choose to develop our full potential. We cannot use the excuses of genetics or environment to avoid responsibility and accountability. If, for example, a man claims to have been born with a tendency to be aggressive just like his father, he cannot expect this innate tendency to exonerate him and prevent him from being held accountable for his own bad behaviour. This is a test from Allah (ﷻ), and He has provided him with the tools to be successful in the test. Allah is also merciful and understands the challenges faced by each and every human being; He will take those factors into consideration when passing judgment.

The stories of many of the Companions of the Prophet (ﷺ) highlight this important point. These Companions were individuals who disbelieved, followed their own desires, and engaged in sins, but they changed to become men and women with lofty aspirations and righteous behaviour. Their main objective shifted from a focus on this world to the worship of Allah (ﷻ), and this was reflected in their behaviour and attitudes. 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭâb (رضي الله عنه), for one, went from being a man who was strongly against Islam and the Prophet (ﷺ), to one of the most righteous and just members of the Muslim community, and one who was much loved by the Prophet (ﷺ) himself.

The personality of the believer

The true believers have a distinct personality with a particular way of thinking about, and relating to, the world that is different from

that of other people. In addition to having their own unique personality traits, they follow the guidance of Allah in all areas of life, and they work on developing noble and virtuous characteristics. Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) said in the following hadiths: «The most perfect man in his faith, among the believers, is the one with the best behaviour.» (a sound hadith recorded by Abu Dâwood)

«Nothing is weightier on the scale of deeds than one's good manners.» (recorded by Bukhari)

«The Prophet (ﷺ) asked: Would you like me to tell you which one of you I love the most and who will be closest to me on the Day of Judgment? The Companions fell silent, and the Prophet repeated his question two or three times until they said: Yes, O Prophet, tell us. He said: The ones among you with the best manners.» (recorded by Bukhari)

According to these hadiths, the nature of Muslims is to be very concerned about performing good deeds and acquiring virtues. They never tire of attempting to perfect themselves; they continue to struggle until the end of their lives. One of the best of the virtues is learning and teaching religious knowledge, because it is this knowledge that enables people to distinguish between good and evil.

The Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) exemplified virtuous character traits, and he is our model for personality development and self-actualization. Allah (ﷻ) mentions his character in the Qur'an:

﴿And indeed, you are of a great moral character.﴾ *(Qur'an 68: 4)*

The Prophet (ﷺ) said: «Indeed, I was sent to perfect (or complete) noble (traits of) character.» (recorded by Bukhari)

The Prophet (ﷺ) directed us to the path of purification of the soul and the path of moderation and balance. Since these paths lead us to fulfil the natural inclination to worship Allah (ﷻ), there will be no distress or conflict in our personality. Sound mental and emotional health can also be attained by restraining the negative attributes of the self, such as jealousy, greed, anger, and so forth.

Positive character traits

As the believers submit their souls to Allah (ﷻ) and direct themselves to the straight path, they attempt to engage in virtuous behaviours. Over time, the virtuous behaviours become habitual and enter into their behavioural repertoire; they become part of their personality, as Al-Jaza'iry mentions:

> When these traits result in the desire for virtue and the truth, love of good deeds, longing to perform charitable deeds, and being pleased with good things, being displeased with disgraceful things, and when this is the basic source of motivation to habitually do good deeds, then this is called 'good character'.[3]

There are many positive character traits, and these are discussed in more detail in other sources.[4] Some of the traits that the believers strive to develop include kindness, mercy, truthfulness, humility, patience and justice.

Kindness, compassion and mercy

Kindness and compassion are fundamental character traits whose absence in an individual may lead to various sorts of evil. This kindness must extend to everyone and everything with whom the individual interacts, including spouses, children, relatives, animals, the environment, and society as a whole. The significance of kindness is mentioned in several hadiths. The Prophet (ﷺ) said: «Kindness is not found in anything but that it adds to its beauty, and it is not withdrawn from anything but it makes it defective.» (recorded by Muslim)

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[3] al-Jaza'iry, A. B. J., 2001, *Minhaj al-Muslim,* Riyadh: Darussalam, Vol. 1, p. 287.

[4] See for example al-Hashimi, *The Ideal Muslim* and *The Ideal Muslimah* (Riyadh: International Islamic Publishing House).

The Prophet (ﷺ) said: «Allah is kind and loves kindness. He rewards kindness with what he does not give for other good deeds.» (recorded by Muslim)

The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said: «He who is deprived of kindness is in fact deprived of everything that is good.» (recorded by Muslim)

Truthfulness and honesty

Islam is the religion of truth, and one of the noble characteristics of its followers is honesty and truthfulness. Allah (ﷻ) says:

﴿And the one [the Prophet] who has brought the truth and [they who] believed in it — those are the righteous.﴾ *(Qur'an 39: 33)*

The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said: «Truthfulness leads to righteousness, and righteousness leads to paradise. A man keeps on telling the truth until he becomes a truthful person. Falsehood leads to wickedness, and wickedness leads to the fire, and a man will keep on telling lies until he is written as a liar before Allah.» (recorded by Muslim)

Truthfulness is manifested in several ways:[5]

1. Truthful speech: whenever the believers speak, they ensure that they are speaking the truth
2. Truthfulness in dealings and transactions: the believers are honest in dealing with others by avoiding cheating, forgery, or any form of deception
3. Fulfilling promises: being true to one's promises is a sign of truthfulness
4. Avoiding false impressions: avoiding displaying on the outside what is not reality on the inside.

[5] al-Jaza'iry, 2001, pp. 330-331.

Humility

Humility is one of the noblest virtues for people to develop, but it is also one of the most challenging. Allah (ﷻ) praises His servants who are humble:

﴿...Allah will bring forth [in place of them] a people He will love and who will love Him, [who are] humble towards the believers, stern against the disbelievers; they strive in the cause of Allah and do not fear the blame of a critic...﴾ *(Qur'an 5: 54)*

The Prophet (ﷺ) said: «Allah has revealed to me that you should be humble to one another. One should neither boast above another nor transgress against another.» (recorded by Muslim)

He (ﷺ) also said: «Charity does not decrease wealth. If one forgives, Allah increases his honour, and if one humbles himself before Allah, Allah raises him in status.» (recorded by Muslim)

'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭâb (رضي الله عنه) was well-known for his humility, and there are several stories from his life that reflect this. Ḥasan al-Baṣri said:

> 'Umar went out on a hot day, holding his cloak over his head. A young man passed by on a donkey, and he said: O young man, let me ride with you. The young man got off the donkey and said: Ride, O Commander of the Faithful. He ('Umar) said: No; you ride, and I will ride behind you. Do you want me to have the more comfortable place (in the front) while you ride in the less comfortable place (at the back)? So he rode behind the young man, and he entered Madinah riding behind him, with the people looking on.[6]

It was narrated that 'Urwah ibn az-Zubayr (may Allah be pleased with them) said:

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[6] Sallâbi, A. M., 2007, *'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭâb: His Life and Times,* Riyadh: International Islamic Publishing House, p. 241.

I saw ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭâb carrying a vessel of water on his shoulder, and I said: O Commander of the Faithful, you should not have to do this. He said: When the delegations came to me listening and obeying, I felt a little proud, and I wanted to put a stop to that.[7]

Patience

Patience is one of the most important characteristics for the Muslim to develop, and it is one of the greatest lessons in life. Patience is actually mentioned more than ninety times in the Qur’an. Allah (ﷻ) says:

﴿And seek help through patience and prayer, and indeed, it is difficult except for the humbly submissive [to Allah], who are certain that they will meet their Lord and that they will return to Him.﴾ *(Qur’an 2: 45-46)*

﴿And be patient [O Muhammad], and your patience is not but through Allah...﴾ *(Qur’an 16: 127)*

Patience means to restrain oneself from what is harmful, and to endure what one dislikes with a sense of acceptance and submission.[8] To restrain oneself from that which is harmful means to avoid approaching any acts of disobedience to Allah (ﷻ). If Muslims experience suffering, they endure it patiently and respond to evil with only that which is good. They pardon and forgive those who caused harm, remembering the rewards that Allah (ﷻ) has promised. Allah (ﷻ) says*:*

﴿Say: O My servants who have believed, fear your Lord. For those who do good in this world is good, and the earth of Allah is spacious. Indeed, the patient will be given their reward without account [limit].﴾ *(Qur’an 39: 10)*

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[7] Ibid., p. 242.

[8] al-Jaza’iry, 2001, p. 292.

The Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) modelled forgiveness and patience with those who harmed him. He humbled himself, even during adversity and when people mocked him. He (ﷺ) said: «Charity does not decrease wealth. If one forgives, Allah increases his honour, and if one humbles himself before Allah, Allah raises him in status.» (recorded by Muslim)

Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) said: «Whoever refrains from asking, Allah will grant him independence; whosoever seeks self-sufficiency, Allah will make him self-sufficient. Whoever tries to be patient, Allah will give him patience; and no one is granted a gift better and more comprehensive than patience.» (recorded by Bukhari)

Throughout their lifetimes, the believers are either in a condition of gratitude or a state of patience. The Prophet (ﷺ) said: «How wonderful is the affair of the believer. All of his affairs are good, unlike anyone else. When he experiences a joyful occasion, he is grateful; and it will be good for him. If he suffers misfortune and endures it patiently, then it will also be good for him.» (recorded by Muslim)

Justice

Justice means to be fair and equitable and to avoid discrimination, unequal treatment and oppression. Justice is indispensable for individuals as well as for society. It results in individual contentment and subsequent healthy functioning of the society.

﴿Indeed, Allah orders justice and good conduct and giving to relatives, and forbids immorality and bad conduct and oppression...﴾

(Qur'an 16: 90)

When justice is absent, people become disgruntled and may act to obtain their due rights, sometimes resorting to violence.

There are various categories of justice:[9]

1. Justice with Allah (ﷻ): by worshipping Him alone with no partners, and by obeying His commands
2. Justice in judgments between people: by giving every person what is rightfully due to them. Allah (ﷻ) commands that justice be employed when settling disputes between believing men and women: ﴿And if it returns, then make settlement between them in justice and act justly. Indeed, Allah loves those who act justly.﴾ *(Qur'an 49: 9)*
3. Justice among wives and children: by not giving one preference over another
4. Justice in speech: by not testifying falsely or lying
5. Justice in belief: by not believing other than the truth.

The effect of justice upon society is illustrated in this story about 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭâb (رضي الله عنه):

> It is reported to have been said that once Caesar sent a messenger to 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭâb to monitor his activities and situation. When his envoy entered Al-Madinah, he started searching for 'Umar and asked, 'Where is your king?' They replied, 'We do not have any king but an honored *Amir*. He went outside of Al-Madinah.' So he went looking for him and discovered him sleeping on the sand using his stick as a pillow. This was a small staff, which he always carried with him, and he used it to stop others when they were doing evil. When he saw him sleeping like that, he sensed humility in his heart and said to himself, 'This is the man whom all the kings are worried about, yet look at his condition. O 'Umar, you have been just so you can sleep. While our king is a tyrant, so there he stays up the whole night in fear.'[10]

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[9] Ibid., 2001, pp. 311-312

[10] Ibid., 2001, p. 313.

Positive psychology

An interesting development in contemporary secular psychology has been the emergence of a new field called 'positive psychology.' This is defined as the scientific study of optimal human functioning, with the primary goal of discovering and promoting strengths and virtues that enable individuals and communities to thrive.[11] In their introduction to this field, the founders describe positive psychology:

> A science of positive subjective experience, positive individual traits, and positive institutions promises to improve quality of life and prevent the pathologies that arise when life is barren and meaningless. The exclusive focus on pathology that has dominated so much of our discipline results in a model of the human being lacking the positive features that make life worth living. Hope, wisdom, creativity, future mindedness, courage, spirituality, responsibility, and perseverance are ignored or explained as transformations of more authentic negative impulses. The authors... predict that the next century will see a science and profession that will come to understand and build the factors that allow individuals, communities, and societies to flourish.[12]

The table below lists some of the strengths of human beings that the theorists originally developed as goals for human development and clinical intervention.

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[11] Myers, 2007, p. 628.

[12] Seligman, M. E. P., & Csikszentmihalyi, M., 2000, Positive psychology: An introduction, *American Psychologist 55(1).*

List of human strengths[13]

Strengths of cognition:

1. Curiosity/interest
2. Love of learning/knowledge
3. Rationality/judgment
4. Originality/ingenuity
5. Personal intelligence/emotional intelligence/social intelligence

Strengths of emotion:

6. Appreciation of beauty and excellence/awe/wonder/ gratitude
7. Hope/optimism/future-mindedness/planning
8. Love of life/zest

Strengths of will:

9. Courage/integrity
10. Industry/ perseverance

Relational and civic strengths:

11. Kindness/generosity/care/nurturance
12. Responsibility/justice/tolerance
13. Humour/playfulness
14. Capacity to love and to be loved
15. Citizenship/duty/loyalty/teamwork
16. Humane leadership

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[13] Seligman, M.E.P., 2000, 'Positive Clinical Psychology', in L.G., Aspinwall & U.M., Staudinger (Eds.), *A Psychology of Human Strengths: Perspectives on an Emerging Field*, Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

Strengths of coherence:

17. Honesty/authenticity
18. Integration/balance/temperance
19. Self-control/self-regulation
20. Wisdom/prudence
21. Spirituality/sense of purpose/faith/religiousness.

A review of this list will lead one to conclude that Islam was the first to propose a theory of 'positive psychology,' since many of these are the same positive personality or character traits that are encouraged from an Islamic perspective. The main distinction between the scientific approach and the Islamic one is that in Islam, one attempts to develop these traits for the sake and pleasure of Allah (ﷻ), while the main goal in the scientific approach is to improve one's existence and experience in this life.

Negative character traits

There are many negative character traits, many of which are the opposite of the positive characteristics. These might include oppression, envy, greed, pride, conceit, and so forth. Only arrogance and showing off are presented here, due to their serious nature.

Arrogance

The opposite of humility (discussed above in positive traits) is arrogance. Allah (ﷻ) warned us against arrogance, saying:

﴿And do not walk upon the earth exultantly [with conceit and arrogance]. Indeed, you will never tear the earth [apart], and you will never reach the mountains in height.﴾ *(Qur'an 17: 37)*

These verses indicate that we have no right to be arrogant because we are minute and weak creatures in comparison to the

majesty of the rest of Allah's creation. Arrogance was actually the downfall of Satan; he thought that he was better than Adam (عليه السلام).

The Prophet (ﷺ) said: «There are three people whom Allah will not speak to on the Day of Resurrection, nor will He sanctify them, nor look at them, and they will have a grievous penalty. These are: an old man who commits illegal sexual acts, a ruler who lies, and an arrogant poor person.» (recorded by Muslim)

The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said: «Shall I not inform you about the inmates of hell? It is every violent, impertinent and arrogant person.» (recorded by Bukhari and Muslim)

The Prophet (ﷺ) also said: «Glory is His (Allah's) lower garment, and pride is the upper one, and (Allah says): He who contends with Me in regard to them, I shall torment him.» (recorded by Muslim)

Showing off (riyâ')

Riyâ' means showing off by performing deeds in order to gain recognition or attention from others. The deeds may be considered to be acts of obedience, but due to the distorted intention of the individual, they will not be accepted by Allah (ﷻ). Riyâ' involves a level of hypocrisy and is considered to be a minor form of shirk.

Allah (ﷻ) says:

﴿So woe to those who pray, [but] who are heedless of their prayer — those who make show [of their deeds] and withhold [simple] assistance.﴾ *(Qur'an 107: 4-7)*

The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) warned people of this minor shirk. He said: «The thing I fear most for you is the lesser shirk. They (Companions) asked: O Messenger of Allah! What is the lesser shirk? He said: Showing off. On the Day of Judgment, when rewarding people for their deeds, Allah the Exalted and Glorious will say to the hypocrites: Go to those for the sake of whom you

performed your good deeds, and see if you can get any reward from them.» (a sound hadith recorded by Aḥmad)

Regarding showing off, the Prophet (ﷺ) said: «He who lets people hear of his good deeds intentionally to win their praise, Allah will let people know his real intention (on the Day of Resurrection), and he who does good things in public to show off and win the praise of the people, Allah will disclose his real intention (and humiliate him).» (recorded by Muslim)

Similarly, the Prophet (ﷺ) also said: «The first person to be judged on the Day of Resurrection will be a man who was martyred. He will be brought forth, and Allah will remind him of His blessings, and he will recognize them. Then he will be asked: What did you do with them? He will say: I fought for Your sake until I was martyred. Allah will say: You have lied. You only fought so that people would say: He is courageous, and they did say it. Then He will order that he be dragged on his face and thrown into the fire. Then there will be a man who studied much, taught others, and recited Qur'an. He will be brought forth, and Allah (ﷻ) will remind him of His blessings, and he will recognize them. Then he will be asked: What did you do with them? He will say: I studied much, taught others, and recited Qur'an for Your sake. Allah will say: You have lied. You studied so that people would say: He is a scholar, and you recited Qur'an so that they would say: He is a reciter — and they did say it. Then He will order that he be dragged on his face and thrown into the fire. Then there will be a man to whom Allah gave all types of wealth in abundance. He will be brought forth, and Allah will remind him of His blessings, and he will recognize them. Then he will be asked: What did you do with them? He will say: I have never seen any way in which You would like money to be spent for Your sake without spending it. Allah will say: You have lied. You did that so people would say: He is generous, and they did say it. Then He will order that he be dragged on his face and thrown into the fire.» (recorded by Muslim)

The signs of riyâ' include the following:

1. Increasing acts of obedience when praised or admired for them, and decreasing or abandoning them following criticism or blame
2. Being enthusiastic about performing acts of worship when in the presence of other people, but being lazy and forgetful when alone.[14]

Personality of the hypocrites

The hypocrites are a special category of people, who are described by Allah (ﷻ) in the Qur'an. At the beginning of Soorat al-Baqarah, Allah describes the believers, the disbelievers, and then the hypocrites. He says:

﴿And of the people are some who say: We believe in Allah and the last day, but they are not believers. They [think to] deceive Allah and those who believe, but they deceive not except themselves, and perceive [it] not. In their hearts is disease, so Allah has increased their disease, and for them is a painful punishment because they [habitually] used to lie. And when it is said to them: Do not cause corruption on the earth, they say: We are but reformers. Unquestionably, it is they who are the corrupters, but they perceive [it] not. And when it is said to them: Believe as the people have believed, they say: Should we believe as the foolish have believed? Unquestionably, it is they who are the foolish, but they know [it] not. And when they meet those who believe, they say: We believe; but when they are along with their evil ones, they say: Indeed, we are with you; we were only mockers. [But] Allah mocks them and prolongs them in their transgression [while] they wander blindly. Those are the ones who have purchased error [in exchange] for

[14] al-Jaza'iry, 2001, p. 354.

guidance, so their transaction has brought no profit, nor were they guided.﴾ *(Qur'an 2: 8-16)*

They are also described in Soorat al-Munâfiqoon (the Hypocrites), in the following manner:

﴿When the hypocrites come to you, [O Muhammad], they say: We testify that you are the Messenger of Allah. And Allah knows that you are His Messenger, and Allah testifies that the hypocrites are liars. They have taken their oaths as a cover, so they averted [people] from the way of Allah. Indeed, it was evil what they were doing. That is because they believed, and then they disbelieved; so their hearts were sealed over, and they do not understand. And when you see them, their forms please you, and if they speak, you listen to their speech. [They are] as if they were pieces of wood propped up — they think that every shout is against them. They are the enemy, so beware of them. May Allah destroy them; how are they deluded?﴾ *(Qur'an 63: 1-4)*

These verses highlight some of the specific and unique characteristics of the hypocrites. The main characteristic is that they demonstrate belief outwardly while hiding their disbelief. The Arabic term for hypocrisy, *nifâq,* means showing conformity or agreement with something, while concealing incredulity and evil.[15] When they meet the believers, they claim that they believe in Allah and the last day, but they are lying, because this is not what they really believe.[16] They utter it with their tongues but defy it with their hearts and deeds. Their hearts are diseased with doubt.

The hypocrites engage in mischief on the earth, such as disobeying Allah (ﷻ), abandoning what He has made obligatory, and committing prohibited acts. They also assist the disbelievers

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[15] Ibn Kathir, 2000, *Tafsir ibn Kathir (Abridged)*, Riyadh: Darussalam, Vol. 1, p. 126.

[16] Ibid., p. 126.

against the friends of Allah (ﷻ) by giving the disbelievers their support and loyalty. The main mischief of the hypocrites is that they confuse the believers by their outward appearance and behaviour, thus misleading and deceiving them. This is why their evil is worse than that of the disbelievers, who do not pretend.[17]

The main personality characteristics of the hypocrites are lying, breaking promises, and treachery. Muhammad (ﷺ) said: «The signs of a hypocrite are three: when he speaks, he lies; when he promises, he breaks it; and when he is entrusted with something, he proves treacherous.» (recorded by Bukhari and Muslim)

Those who have faith may also have some features of hypocrisy. The Prophet (ﷺ) said: «There are four (qualities), whoever has them is a hypocrite, and whoever has a characteristic of these four possesses a characteristic of hypocrisy until he leaves it: when he speaks, he lies; when he promises, he breaks it; when he makes a covenant, he proves treacherous; and when he argues, he behaves in an imprudent and uncouth manner.» (recorded by Bukhari and Muslim)

The believers always try to purify their personalities from any form of hypocrisy.

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[17] Ibid., pp. 132-133.

CHAPTER FOUR

Forces Working on the Heart and Soul

There are forces working upon the heart and soul, and they are generally of four types:

1. Inspiration and guidance that Allah (ﷻ) puts into the hearts of believers,
2. Assistance from the angels that supports the individual in remaining on the straight path,
3. Misguidance from Satan that leads to acts of disobedience and disbelief, and
4. The whims and desires of the soul itself.

Allah's influence upon the heart and soul

Allah (ﷻ) says:

﴿O you who have believed, respond to Allah and to the Messenger when he calls you to that which gives you life. And know that Allah intervenes between a human being and his heart, and that to Him you will be gathered.﴾ *(Qur'an 8: 24)*

In his commentary on this verse, Ibn Katheer reported that as-Suddi explained that this means that Allah (ﷻ) will: "Prevent oneself from [being influenced by] his own heart, so he will neither believe nor disbelieve except by His leave."[1]

The hearts of all humans are between the fingers of Allah (ﷻ), and He turns them in any way that He desires. As mentioned previously, the Arabic word for heart, 'qalb', comes from the root *qalaba,* which means to change, alter, transform, or convert. The heart is constantly changing, and the greatest fear is that it would change from belief to disbelief. Even the Prophet (ﷺ) used to supplicate for an obedient heart. He (ﷺ) said: «Verily, the hearts of all the sons of Adam are between two fingers of the Compassionate, like one heart. He turns that to any direction He likes.» Then the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said: «O Allah, the Turner of the hearts, turn our hearts to Your obedience.» (recorded by Muslim)

Guidance from Allah helps people to be sincere to Allah (ﷻ), both in their hearts and in their actions. It helps them to be steadfast and patient in times of adversity, and grateful in times of abundance and blessings.

«Shahr ibn Hawshab narrated that he once asked the Mother of the Believers, Umm Salamah (*raḍiya Allâhu 'anha* — may Allah be pleased with her): O Mother of the Believers, what was the most frequent supplication of the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) while he was with you? She replied: The supplication he most often made was to say: O You Who changes the hearts, establish my heart firmly in Your religion. She then said: I asked him: O Messenger of Allah, why do you so often supplicate with: O You Who changes the hearts, establish my heart firmly in Your religion? He (ﷺ) replied: O Umm Salamah, there is no human being whose heart is not between two of the fingers of Allah. For whomsoever He wills, He establishes it, and for whomsoever He wills, He allows it to deviate. Mu'âdh (one of the

[1] Ibid., Vol. 4, p. 287.

narrators of the hadith) then recited: Our Lord! Let not our hearts deviate (from the truth) after You have guided us.» (a sound hadith recorded by at-Tirmidhi)

This hadith indicates that people's hearts are between the fingers of Allah (ﷻ), and He may either guide them or allow them to deviate. Allah (ﷻ), in His justice and mercy, will never guide anyone who is not deserving of guidance or leave one astray who deserves to be guided.

﴿Then is one who has deserved the decree of punishment [to be guided]...?﴾ *(Qur'an 39: 19)*

The guidance that Allah (ﷻ) provides comes in many forms, but it is primarily through influencing the heart and soul of the individual. This is mentioned several times in the Qur'an.

﴿...And whoever believes in Allah — He will guide his heart. And Allah is knowing of all things.﴾ *(Qur'an 64: 11)*

In every prayer of the day, when we recite Soorat al-Fâtiḥah, we beseech Allah (ﷻ) to guide us:

﴿Guide us to the straight path, the path of those upon whom You have bestowed favour, not of those who have evoked [Your] anger or of those who are astray.﴾ *(Qur'an 1: 6-7)*

If it were not Allah (ﷻ) who guides us, there would be no need to supplicate to Him in this manner.

In Soorat al-Baqarah, Allah (ﷻ) also mentions that guidance comes from Him (ﷻ), through the Qur'an:

﴿This is the book about which there is no doubt, a guidance for those conscious of Allah — who believe in the unseen, establish prayer, and spend out of what We have provided for them, and who believe in what has been revealed to you, [O Muhammad], and what was revealed before you, and of the hereafter they are certain [in faith]. Those are upon [right] guidance from their Lord, and it is those who are the successful.﴾ *(Qur'an 2: 2-5)*

This verse details the characteristics of the guided people that ensure that they are on the right path, and it specifies that guidance is from their Lord.

﴿...And Allah guided those who believed to the truth concerning that over which they had differed, by His permission. And Allah guides whom He wills to a straight path.﴾ *(Qur'an 2: 213)*

﴿And Allah invites to the home of peace [paradise] and guides whom He wills to a straight path.﴾ *(Qur'an 10: 25)*

﴿...Allah chooses for Himself whom He wills and guides to Himself whoever turns back [to Him].﴾ *(Qur'an 42: 13)*

﴿Indeed, this is a reminder, so he who wills may take to his Lord a way. And you do not will except that Allah wills. Indeed, Allah is All-Knowing and Wise. He admits whom He wills into His mercy...﴾ *(Qur'an 76: 29-31)*

﴿...And they [people of paradise] will say: Praise be to Allah, who has guided us to this; and we would never have been guided if Allah had not guided us. Certainly, the messengers of our Lord had come with the truth...﴾ *(Qur'an 7: 43)*

Due to Allah's complete justice, He only guides those who are deserving of His guidance. There are several verses specifying that the ones worthy of Allah's guidance are those individuals who seek Allah (ﷻ) and attempt to follow His way, making an effort to understand, to believe, to gain knowledge and to obey. Initially, this will not be complete, but their sincere yearning leads to assistance from Allah (ﷻ).

﴿And those who strive for Us — We will surely guide them to Our ways. And indeed, Allah is with the doers of good.﴾ *(Qur'an 29: 69)*

﴿So those who believe in Allah and hold fast to Him — He will admit them to mercy from Himself and bounty, and guide them to Himself on a straight path.﴾ *(Qur'an 4: 175)*

﴿By which Allah guides those who pursue His pleasure to the ways of

peace, and brings them out from darknesses into the light, by His permission, and guides them to a straight path.﴾ *(Qur'an 5: 16)*

﴿...Say, [O Muhammad]: Indeed, Allah leaves astray whom He wills and guides to Himself whoever turns back [to Him].﴾ *(Qur'an 13: 27)*

﴿So whoever Allah wants to guide — He expands his breast to [contain] Islam...﴾ *(Qur'an 6: 125)*

There are several verses indicating that Allah (ﷻ) affects the hearts of the believers who stand firm for His religion. One of these examples was during the migration of the Prophet (ﷺ) and Abu Bakr (رضي الله عنه) from Makkah to Madinah. At one point during the journey, they hid in the cave of Thawr. When the disbelievers of the Quraysh were near, Abu Bakr (رضي الله عنه) became afraid and anxious because he was concerned about the well-being of the Prophet (ﷺ). The Prophet (ﷺ) calmed him by reminding Him of the presence of Allah (ﷻ), who then sent peace and tranquillity upon them.

﴿If you do not aid him [the Prophet] — Allah has already aided him when those who disbelieved had driven him out [of Makkah] as one of two, when they were in the cave and he [Muhammad] said to his companion: Do not grieve; indeed Allah is with us. And Allah sent down His tranquillity upon him and supported him with soldiers [angels] you did not see and made the word of those who disbelieved the lowest, while the word of Allah — that is the highest. And Allah is Exalted in might and Wise.﴾ *(Qur'an 9: 40)*

In Soorat al-Fatḥ, Allah (ﷻ) states twice that He sends down tranquillity upon the believers who follow the Prophet (ﷺ) and the guidance of Allah.

﴿It is He who sent down tranquillity into the hearts of the believers that they would increase in faith along with their [present] faith. And to Allah belong the soldiers of the heavens and the earth, and ever is Allah Knowing and Wise.﴾ *(Qur'an 48: 4)*

This verse refers to the Companions who accepted the call of Allah (ﷻ) and obeyed the decision of Allah and His Messenger (ﷺ)

regarding the Treaty of Ḥudaybiyah. The Companions were content with the decision, so Allah (ﷻ) increased their faith and tranquillity by sending His grace upon them.[2]

﴿...But Allah sent down His tranquillity upon His Messenger and upon the believers and imposed upon them the word of righteousness, and they were more deserving of it and worthy of it. And ever is Allah, of all things, knowing.﴾ *(Qur'an 48: 26)*

In these three verses, the Arabic word that is used for tranquillity is *sakeenah,* which means devout, God-inspired peace of mind, calm, tranquillity, or peace.[3] The definition itself indicates that it is inspired by Allah (ﷻ) and not something that the individual is able to create, either by thoughts or behaviours. It is the grace of Allah that leads to an increase in eemân.

In the famous story of the People of the Cave, which is related in the chapter of the Qur'an named 'The Cave' (Soorat al-Kahf), Allah (ﷻ) mentions that He strengthened the hearts of the youth so that they would be able to face the opposition and oppression that they were experiencing at that time. They were given this blessing due to their firm belief in Allah (ﷻ) and their dedicated worship of Him.

﴿And We bound [made firm] their hearts when they stood up and said: Our Lord is the Lord of the heavens and the earth. Never will we invoke besides Him any deity. We would have certainly spoken, then, an excessive transgression.﴾ *(Qur'an 18: 14)*

These verses indicate that for those who are obedient to Allah (ﷻ), He will support them and provide them with fortitude to endure patiently the calamities of this life. He will also send tranquillity upon them in order to calm their hearts and to eliminate anxieties. This will further strengthen their faith and resolve.

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[2] Ibid., Vol. 9, p. 128.

[3] Wehr, H., 1974, *A Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic,* Beirut: Librairie du Liban, p. 418.

Allah (ﷻ) also misguides the disbelievers who deserve misguidance, by constricting and sealing their hearts (as mentioned above).

﴿...And whoever He wants to misguide — He makes his breast tight and constricted as though he were climbing into the sky. Thus does Allah place defilement upon those who do not believe.﴾

(Qur'an 6: 125)

In reference to the Children of Israel, Allah (ﷻ) mentions:

﴿...And when they deviated, Allah caused their hearts to deviate. And Allah does not guide the defiantly disobedient people.﴾ *(Qur'an 61:5)*

﴿A group [of you] He guided, and a group deserved [to be in] error. Indeed, they [the latter] had taken the devils as allies instead of Allah while they thought that they were guided.﴾ *(Qur'an 7: 30)*

If Allah had willed, He could have guided all of humankind, but this was not part of His plan. The wisdom of this is related to accountability, judgment and justice. We will all be held accountable for our choices and judged accordingly. It would be unjust to guide someone who is undeserving of guidance, and vice versa.

﴿And if Allah had willed, He could have made you [of] one religion, but He causes to stray whom He wills, and guides whom He wills. And you will surely be questioned about what you used to do.﴾

(Qur'an 16: 93)

﴿And upon Allah is the direction of the [right] way, and among them [the various paths] are those deviating. And if He willed, He could have guided you all.﴾ *(Qur'an 16: 9)*

Inspiration

At times, Allah guides the believer through inspiration, which generally means revelation from Allah to His messengers, as explained in the following verse:

﴿And it is not for any human being that Allah should speak to him

except by revelation or from behind a partition or that He sends a messenger to reveal, by His permission, what He wills. Indeed, He is Most High and Wise.﴾ *(Qur'an 42: 51)*

However, inspiration may also refer to secretly informing someone of something. In the Qur'an, Allah gives us the example of the mother of Moses (عليه السلام). She became very distressed when Moses was born because at that time, Pharaoh was killing all of the baby boys born to the Children of Israel. She was very worried and confused, not knowing how to protect him. Allah (سبحانه وتعالى) inspired into her heart and mind the action she should take.

﴿And We inspired to the mother of Moses: Suckle him, but when you fear for him, cast him into the river, and do not fear and do not grieve. Indeed, We will return him to you and will make him [one] of the messengers.﴾ *(Qur'an 28: 7)*

In this case, the inspiration came directly to her heart.

The story continues:

﴿And the family of Pharaoh picked him up [out of the river] so that he would become to them an enemy and a [cause of] grief. Indeed, Pharaoh, Haman, and their soldiers were deliberate sinners. And the wife of Pharaoh said: [He will be] a comfort of the eye [source of joy] for me and for you. Do not kill him; perhaps he may benefit us, or we may adopt him as a son. And they perceived not. And the heart of Moses' mother became empty [of all else]. She was about to disclose [the matter concerning] him had We not bound fast her heart that she would be of the believers. And she said to his sister: Follow him. So she watched him from a distance while they perceived not. And We had prevented from him [all] wet nurses before, so she said: Shall I direct you to a household that will be responsible for him for you, while they are to him [for his upbringing] sincere? So We restored him to his mother that she might be content and not grieve, and that she would know that the promise of Allah is true. But most of them [the people] do not know.﴾ *(Qur'an 28: 8-13)*

These verses further support the point that Allah (ﷻ) controls the hearts of the believers. Allah bound the heart of Moses' mother so that she would not disclose the truth. Allah also assisted her by returning her child to her in order to reduce her grief and to bring contentment to her heart. The help of Allah (ﷻ) is always near.

Inspiration may also come in the form of a dream, as we will discuss in the section on sleep and dreaming. This is considered a gift to the believers, as well as a form of guidance and protection. We should not rely on inspiration alone, however, to make a decision; it must be combined with rationality and must adhere to the dictates of Islam. This is because Satan may inspire us to do evil or may make something appear pleasing when, in reality, it is displeasing to Allah.

Assistance from angels

As part of his plan, Allah (ﷻ) has appointed an angel for each human, to serve as a companion and guide. The Prophet (ﷺ) said: «For every one of you there has been appointed one companion among the jinn and another from among the angels.» (recorded by Muslim) The angel companion encourages the human to submit to and worship Allah, to follow the path of truth and righteousness, and to avoid evil and sin. Both the companion from the jinn and the companion from the angels attempt to influence the person.

The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said: «When a person goes to bed, an angel and a devil hasten towards him. The angel says: End your day with good, and the devil says: End your day with evil. If he remembers Allah until (sleep) overtakes him, the angel expels the devil and spends the night watching over him. When he wakes up, an angel and a devil hasten towards him. The angel says: Start (your day) with good, and the devil says: Start (your day) with evil. If he says: 'Praise be to Allah Who has brought my soul back to life after causing it to die, and has not caused me to die during my sleep. Praise

be to Allah Who has detained the souls whom He decreed should die, and has sent back others until an appointed time. Praise be to Allah Who grasps the heavens and the earth lest they move away from their places, and if they were to move away from their places, there is not one that could grasp them after Him. Praise be to Allah Who holds up the heavens so that they cannot fall on the earth except by His leave,' then the angel expels the devil and spends the day watching over him.»[4]

This hadith indicates that those who remember Allah (ﷻ) and recite supplications are protected from the evil jinn and obtain the assistance and guidance of the angels. This support will encourage them to increase their good deeds, which in turn will bring further aid and love from the angels. Since angels are dedicated servants of Allah, they will only bring goodness to these individuals.

The love that the angels have for humans is specifically for the believers. The Prophet (ﷺ) said: «When Allah loves a person, He calls (the angel) Gabriel (عليه السلام) and tells him: Allah loves so and so, so love him. Then Gabriel loves him and calls out to the inhabitants of the heavens: Allah loves so and so, so love him. So the inhabitants of the heavens love him, and he will find acceptance on earth.» (recorded by Bukhari and Muslim)

The angels also ask Allah to send blessings upon the believers. Allah (ﷻ) says:

﴿It is He who confers blessings upon you, and His angels [ask Him to do so] that He may bring you out from darknesses into the light. And ever is He, to the believers, Merciful.﴾ *(Qur'an 33: 43)*

The sending of blessings from the angels means that they pray for the believers and seek forgiveness for them from Allah (ﷻ). The

[4] A sound hadith recorded by Ibn Ḥibbân and al-Ḥâkim, as quoted in al-Ashqar, U.S., 2005, *The World of the Noble Angels in the Light of the Qur'an and Sunnah,* Riyadh: International Islamic Publishing House, pp. 67-68.

verse from the Qur'an indicates that through these blessings, the believers are saved from the darkness of disbelief, polytheism and sin, and are led to the light of the true path, which is Islam. Through this light, the believer is guided towards righteous words and deeds, as well as towards righteous companions.[5]

There are specific deeds for which the angels send blessings upon an individual; one of these acts is teaching people good things. The Messenger (ﷺ) said: «Allah and His angels, and the inhabitants of the heavens and the earth, even the ant in its hole, and even the fish, send blessings upon the one who teaches people good things. (a sound hadith recorded by at-Tirmidhi)

They also send blessings upon those who visit the sick. The Prophet (ﷺ) said: «When anyone visits a sick person in the evening, seventy thousand angels go out with him and pray for forgiveness for him until the morning, and he will have provision in paradise. And whoever goes to visit a sick person in the morning, seventy thousand angels go with him, and they pray for forgiveness for him until the evening, and he will have provision in paradise.» (a sound hadith recorded by Abu Dâwood)

Sending blessings upon the Prophet (ﷺ) will also bring blessings from the angels. The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said: «If anyone sends blessings on me, the angels send blessings on him as long as he is sending blessings on me. So let a person do a little of that or a lot.» (a reliable hadith recorded by Ibn Mâjah)

Other examples of deeds for which the angels send blessings include waiting for congregational prayer, praying in the first row, filling the gaps in the rows, and eating the pre-dawn meal before fasting (as in the month of Ramadan).[6]

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[5] al-Ashqar, 2005, p. 83.

[6] Ibid., pp. 81-82.

It is also comforting to note that humans have guardian angels to protect them from whatever has been decreed by Allah (ﷻ) not to happen to them. These angels are in front of them and behind them, guarding them throughout the day and night. When Allah's decree comes which should occur for the person, they withdraw from him.

﴿For each one are successive [angels] before and behind him who protect him by the decree of Allah. Indeed, Allah will not change the condition of a people until they change what is in themselves...﴾ *(Qur'an 13: 11)*

These guardian angels remain with the servant until the time of death, when the angels of death arrive to take his or her soul.

﴿And He is the subjugator over His servants, and He sends over you guardian angels until, when death comes to one of you, Our messengers [angels of death] take him, and they do not fail [in their duties].﴾ *(Qur'an 6: 61)*

Misguidance from Satan

There are other powers in existence that inspire humans to do evil. Satan and his helpers are among these forces. 'Satan' is actually a term that refers to rebellious jinn (and humans) who reject guidance from Allah and wreak havoc in this world. They are enemies of humans, and they attempt to mislead them from the straight path. The jinn are another creation of Allah, created from fire. They are able to see us, but we are normally unable to perceive them. They have power and strength beyond the capabilities of humans.[7]

Satan is able to affect the thoughts and feelings of human beings by targeting their hearts through whisperings and enticements. He accomplishes this in such a manner that the individual does not even

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[7] al-Sha'rawi, 1995, *Magic and Envy in the Light of the Qur'an and Sunna*, Dar al Taqwa, p. 9.

recognize what is happening. This is mentioned in Soorat an-Nâs, the last chapter of the Qur'an:

﴿Say: I seek refuge in the Lord of humankind, the Sovereign of humankind, the God of humankind, from the evil of the retreating whisperer, who whispers [evil] into the breasts of humankind — from among the jinn and humankind.﴾ *(Qur'an 114: 1-6)*

Reading this chapter throughout the day is recommended in order to obtain Allah's protection from the whisperings of Satan, who can be from among the jinn or humans. Ibn Katheer mentions in his explanation of this chapter: "The devil who is squatting (perched) upon the heart of the Son of Adam. So when he becomes absentminded and heedless he whispers. Then, when he remembers Allah he withdraws."[8] A more complete discussion of the goals and methods of Satan is included in the section on the unseen world.

Al-Jawziyah said the following about Satan:

> In every heart there are oneness (*tawḥid*), gnosis, faith and affirmation of God's promise and warning. There are also the desires of the ego, its traits and the attraction of [base] desires and nature. So the heart lies between two calls. Sometimes it inclines towards the call of faith, gnosis, the love of Allah, and the desire for Him alone; sometimes it inclines towards the call of the Devil, base desires and animal nature. This is the heart which gives hope to the Devil, where he pitches his camp and resides. And Allah gives victory to whomsoever He wills,

﴿And there is no victory except from Allah, the Exalted in Might, the Wise.﴾ *(Qur'an 3: 126)*

The Devil has no control over this heart except through the weapons [he finds] there: passions, doubtful practices, delusions and false hopes. So he enters, finds his weapons, takes them and uses them for battle. If the servant has his forces of faith at the ready, they

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[8] Ibn Kathir, 2000, p. 648.

will rise to his defense, multiply and defeat the devils. If not, the territory goes to the enemy, 'and there is neither strength nor power save in Allah.' When the servant allows his Foe to enter and opens the door, lets him in and arms him with the very weapons with which he will fight him, then he has none to blame but himself.[9]

Desires and weaknesses of the soul

Two of the strongest barriers to purification of the soul are desires and doubts.

Desires

These are the appetites or desires of the nafs. Allah (ﷻ) created each of us with varying degrees of negative attributes such as greed, envy, arrogance, laziness, and the desire to commit certain types of sins. We may also have desires for wealth, power, prestige and authority. The purpose of these desires is to test us and to determine whether we will strive to control these according to the guidance of Allah.

﴿And if We had willed, We could have elevated him thereby, but he adhered [instead] to the earth and followed his own desire...﴾

(Qur'an 7: 176)

﴿But as for he who feared the position of his Lord and prevented the soul from [unlawful] inclination, then indeed, paradise will be [his] refuge.﴾ *(Qur'an 79: 40-41)*

The Prophet (ﷺ) said: «The fire is surrounded by all kinds of desires and passions, while paradise is surrounded by all kinds of disliked, undesirable things.»[10] (recorded by Bukhari)

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[9] al-Jawziyyah, 2000, pp. 32-33.

[10] Another way to state this is that the road to hell is paved with desires, while the road to heaven is paved with hardship. (Editor)

At times, the straying of an individual is due to whisperings from Satan, but at other times it comes from the desires and passions of the soul itself. Satan, of course, may focus on these weaknesses in an attempt to misguide us. If we allow these desires to take control, it will lead to dire consequences. Desires cause us to have distorted wants and goals, which lead us to commit sins[11] that may have very negative consequences for us, both in this life and the hereafter.

If left unrestrained, the desires and lusts can become the focus of our lives. We might become slaves to our desires, in that they completely control our lives. Our happiness and contentment are tied to the desires, so that we are only happy when they are fulfilled. Ibn Taymiyah said:

> If he attains it [that is, what he desires], he is pleased and if he is unable to attain it, he becomes discontented. Such a person is the *'abd* [slave] of what he desires of these matters and he is a slave of it, since slavery and servitude are in reality the enslavement and servitude of the heart. Thus, for whatever enslaves the heart and puts it under its servitude, the heart is then a slave of that object. This is why it is said, 'The slave [human] is free as long as he is content [with what Allah has given him] and the free one is a slave as long as he desires.'[12]

That the desires become the god or lord of the individual is mentioned in the Qur'an:

﴿Have you seen he who has taken as his god his [own] desires, and Allah has sent him astray due to knowledge and has set a seal upon his hearing and his heart and put over his vision a veil? So who will guide him after Allah? Then will you not be reminded?﴾

(Qur'an 45: 23)

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[11] Zarabozo, 2002, p. 395.

[12] Ibn Taymiyyah, 1999, *Essay on Servitude.* Birmingham, UK: Al Hidaayah Publishing and Distribution, pp. 100-101.

The possession of innate desires does not imply that a person can use these imperfections as an excuse for engaging in aberrant and immoral behaviour. Al-Junayd once said: "A person is not to be blamed for his nature. Rather, he is to be blamed if he acts according to his nature."[13] Allah (ﷻ) has given us these imperfections as a test. At the same time, He has provided us with the tools and the capability to resist, strive against, and ultimately modify negative characteristics and traits, in a way that is in accordance with the Qur'an and Sunnah. This actually provides us with hope that we can overcome negative traits within ourselves and improve.

Doubts

These are doubts, uncertainties, or misconceptions that an individual entertains, which may distort or destroy existing knowledge and beliefs. They are generally based upon ignorance, which is the reason that knowledge is emphasized in Islam. Ignorance may lead a person to engage in behaviours that are unacceptable and displeasing to Allah (ﷻ); it may also trigger a lack of conviction and resolve, which underlie shortcomings in the process of purification of the soul.[14]

Allah says:

﴿Have you seen the one who takes as his god his own desire? Then would you be responsible for him? Or do you think that most of them hear or reason? They are not except like livestock. Rather, they are [even] more astray in [their] way.﴾ *(Qur'an 25: 43-44)*

﴿And they will say: If only we had been listening or reasoning, we would not be among the companions of the blaze.﴾ *(Qur'an 67: 10)*

Those who get involved in doubtful matters find that their souls are never at rest; their hearts and minds are troubled, and they wonder

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[13] Abu Nu'aym, A., *Hilyat al-Awliya (Vol. 10)*, p. 287.

[14] Zarabozo, 2002, pp. 395, 398.

whether their actions are acceptable. On the other hand, when believers only do those acts which they know to be permissible, they will have hearts that are at rest. They will not have to wonder whether they should have performed a certain act, or blame themselves for anything that they did; they will have certainty.[15]

The Prophet (ﷺ) said: «Leave that which makes you doubt for that which does not make you doubt. Verily, truth is tranquillity, and falsehood is doubt.» (a reliable sound hadith recorded by at-Tirmidhi and an-Nasâ'i)

The believers are those who have no doubt about the truth from Allah and about Islam. Allah (ﷻ) says:

﴿The believers are only the ones who have believed in Allah and His Messenger, and then doubt not, but strive with their properties and their lives in the cause of Allah. It is those who are the truthful.﴾

(Qur'an 49: 15)

Their firm and unwavering certainty of the truthfulness of Islam inspires them to work for the sake of Allah (ﷻ) and to sacrifice in His cause. They carry out actions with a passion and conviction that would be impossible to achieve through any other belief system.

Conclusion about forces working on the heart

We must strive to be aware of the forces acting upon our hearts. If we become neglectful, we will stray from our purpose in life, which is being true and sincere to Allah (ﷻ) through worship of Him. We should follow the steps that will increase our faith and keep us from straying; these involve turning to Allah (ﷻ) and asking Him for guidance, sincerity and purity. Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyah described

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[15] Zarabozo, 1999, Vol. 1, p. 566.

the battle that humans face on a daily basis:

> He is tried through his Foe Iblis, who never lets him be, but comes to him through the doorways of his ego and his [physical] nature. The servant's ego inclines towards the Devil, because the Devil brings forth the things it wants. So [the Devil], the ego and the desires — being the three controlling powers — join forces against the servant with the members of the body, which are only subjugated instruments...
>
> This is the servant's true state [on earth]. It requires the mercy of the Lord to come to the aid of the servant with some force, and to support him through any means that will stand against the forces that seek his ruin. And so Allah sends him His messengers and His Book, and then strengthens him with a noble angel poised against his Foe, the Devil. While the Devil sends his own command to the servant, the angel gives the servant the commandment of his Lord and makes it clear what ruin awaits him should he obey his Foe. Sometimes one wins out, sometimes the other. Victorious is he to whom Allah gives victory; protected is he to whom Allah grants protection...
>
> In opposition to the servant's passions and lower inclinations (which lead him to obey the Devil) and to his soul (which commands towards evil), Allah places light, intuition and reason — which dissuade him from following every whim. Each time he pursues a base desire, [Allah's] reason, intuition or light call out to him, 'Beware! Beware! Ruin and destruction are before you! If you travel behind that guide, you shall fall prey to criminals and highway robbers!' Sometimes he follows this advice, because its wisdom and good counsel are clear to him; sometimes he travels under the guidance of his passions.[16]

[16] al-Jawziyyah, 2000, pp. 16-17.

CHAPTER FIVE

Motivation

Motivation is generally defined as a need or desire that energizes behaviour and directs it towards a particular goal.[1] Motives were bestowed upon humans by Allah (ﷻ), and they are fundamental and vital components of human personality and behaviour. They are part of the 'nature' that Allah created for humans.

﴿Our Lord is He who gave each thing its form and then guided [it].﴾
(Qur'an 20: 50)

The terms 'need' and 'drive' are generally used to indicate motivation that is internally based, while incentives are external factors. Needs actually produce drive in order to attain their fulfilment. We will discuss several types of motivations, including spiritual, physiological and psychological.

Spiritual motivation

As has already been described, the spiritual motivation within us is an innate aspect of our being, and its fulfilment is our ultimate

[1] Myers, 2007, p. 469.

objective in life. Those who fail to achieve this objective will experience feelings of emptiness, despair, anxiety and dread. This motive, or drive, compels us to reflect upon God and His creation, our purpose in life, and our final destiny. It directs us to acknowledge Allah (ﷻ) as our Creator and Sustainer, and to worship and thank Him for the blessings that He has bestowed upon us. This is connected to the concepts of fiṭrah and eemân that we discussed earlier.

Physiological drives

Allah (ﷻ) has endowed human beings with certain physiological motives or drives, primarily for the purpose of self-preservation of the individual and the human race. Humans are driven to fulfil their needs when they are hungry, thirsty, tired, hot, cold, or in pain. The body must be in a state of homeostasis, or balance, for optimal functioning. When this balance is disturbed in any way, a need will arise, driving the person to do something to return the body to homeostasis. For example, if a woman is hungry, she will look for food, prepare it and eat. Upon returning to homeostasis, she will no longer feel that need, so the drive will be reduced.

It is important to note that humans cannot just fulfil these drives in any way that they desire. They must be satisfied in an acceptable, lawful manner, in accordance with Sharia. Gratification of these drives should be done submissively and in gratitude to Allah for the favours that He has provided. Unlawful gratification leads human beings to deviate from their pure innate nature and contributes to unhealthy personality development.

Adam (عليه السلام) was reminded by Allah (ﷻ) to avoid following Satan because he would lead him to be driven out of paradise, where he was free from these needs. Allah (ﷻ) says:

﴿So We said: O Adam, indeed this is an enemy to you and to your wife. Then let him not remove you from paradise so you would suffer. Indeed, it is [promised] for you not to be hungry therein or be unclothed. And indeed, you will not be thirsty therein or be hot from the sun.﴾ *(Qur'an 20: 117-119)*

In the hereafter, people will eat, drink and wear clothes, but this will not be to fulfil needs. They will engage in these behaviours for enjoyment, as part of the reward that Allah (ﷻ) has promised for them. During our time on this earth, however, we experience all of these needs in various degrees. Allah has made the fulfilment of these needs pleasurable, in order to facilitate the process.

Hunger is mentioned several times in the Qur'an:

﴿Let them worship the Lord of this house, Who has fed them, [saving them] from hunger and made them safe, [saving them] from fear.﴾ *(Qur'an 106: 3-4)*

﴿And Allah presents an example: a city which was safe and secure, its provisions coming to it in abundance from every location, but it denied the favours of Allah. So Allah made it taste the enveloping of hunger and fear for what they had been doing.﴾ *(Qur'an 16: 112)*

Allh (ﷻ) also mentions the need for rest:

﴿It is He Who made for you the night to rest therein and the day, giving sight. Indeed, in that are signs for a people who listen.﴾ *(Qur'an 10: 67)*

﴿And it is He Who has made the night for you as clothing and sleep [a means for] rest, and has made the day a resurrection.﴾ *(Qur'an 25: 47)*

Regarding avoidance of heat and cold, tiredness and pain, Allah (ﷻ) says:

﴿And Allah has made for you from your homes a place of rest, and made for you, from the hides of the animals, tents, which you find light on your day of travel and your day of encampment; and from

their wool, fur and hair is furnishing and enjoyment [provision] for a time. And Allah has made for you, from that which He has created, shadows [shade] and has made shelters for you from the mountains, and has made for you garments which protect you from the heat and garments [coats of mail] which protect you from your [enemy] in battle. Thus does He complete His favour upon you that you might submit [to Him].﴾ *(Qur'an 16: 80-81)*

Another basic physiological drive is the sex drive, which is obviously important for perpetuation of the human race. Due to this drive, we form family units, which in turn form into societies and nations. Allah (ﷻ) says:

﴿O humankind, fear your Lord, who created you from one soul and created its mate from it, and dispersed from both of them many men and women. And fear Allah, through whom you ask one another, and the wombs. Indeed, Allah is ever, over you, an Observer.﴾

(Qur'an 4: 1)

﴿O humankind, indeed We have created you from male and female, and made you peoples and tribes that you may know one another. Indeed, the most noble of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous of you. Indeed, Allah is Knowing and Acquainted.﴾

(Qur'an 49: 13)

Allah mentions the creation of males and females because it is from this pairing that nations and tribes develop. The love, mercy and harmony that are nurtured in the marital relationship lead to a healthy environment for the upbringing of children. Healthy families, in turn, are the building blocks of sound societies. Allah (ﷻ) says:

﴿And of His signs is that He created for you from yourselves mates, that you may find tranquillity in them, and He placed between you affection and mercy. Indeed in that are signs for a people who give thought.﴾ *(Qur'an 30: 21)*

One element of this loving relationship is the intimate relationship between husband and wife, which is described in Soorat

al-Baqarah:

﴿It has been made permissible for you the night preceding fasting to go to your wives [for sexual relations]. They are clothing for you, and you are clothing for them...﴾ *(Qur'an 2: 187)*

The fulfilment of sexual desires is the right of both spouses in the marriage, and it is one of the primary purposes of marriage.

Marriage is important because it preserves chastity and prevents the spreading of illicit relationships in the society. The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said: «O young men, those of you who can afford marriage, let them do so, for it restrains eyes and preserves chastity. He who cannot afford it should observe fasting, for it diminishes the urge.» (recorded by Muslim) For those who are unable to marry, fasting is recommended for controlling sexual desires.

The Prophet (ﷺ) actually reprimanded a man who said that he would not marry. He said: «Why do some people say such and such things; but I perform prayer and sleep, I observe fast and I do not, and I marry women. He who turns away from my Sunnah is not from me (not a follower).» (recorded by Muslim)

The Prophet (ﷺ) is indicating here that marriage is part of his Sunnah.

Both spouses will be rewarded for fulfilling their desires in a lawful manner. The Prophet (ﷺ) said: «In having intercourse (with your spouse) there is an act of charity (for which you shall be rewarded). The people said: O Messenger of Allah, one of us fulfils his desires and he is rewarded for that? He replied: Do you not see that if he fulfils it in a forbidden way, that he will have its burden? In the same way, if he fulfils it in a permissible way, he shall have a reward.» (recorded by Muslim)

When a man sees a woman (other than his wife) who arouses his desire, he should go to his wife to fulfil that desire. The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said: «When a woman fascinates any one of you and she

captivates his heart, he should go to his wife and have intercourse with her, for it will repel what he feels.» (recorded by Muslim)

The hadith is specifically directed to men because they are more easily sexually aroused than women are.

The wife is warned not to reject her husband's request for intimate relations, due to the effect that this could have upon the marriage, as well as the possibility of leading the husband to temptation. The Prophet (ﷺ) said: «When a man invites his wife to his bed and she does not respond, and the husband spends the night being angry with her, the angels curse her until the morning.» (recorded by Muslim)

This discussion provides evidence for the innate nature of the sex drive and the importance of marriage in fulfilling that drive. There are many injunctions in Islam to reduce the likelihood of sexual needs being met in an unlawful manner. In addition to encouraging marriage, Islam prescribes the veil (for women), lowering the gaze, limits and modesty in interactions with the opposite gender, strict guidelines for engagement and marriage, severe punishment for adultery and fornication, and so forth. These injunctions are in place to protect both the individual and the society.

Psychological motives

Incentives

Incentives are external factors in the environment that influence individuals, by attracting them and inducing them to act in order to obtain them. People work, for example, to obtain a pay cheque at the end of the month. The pay cheque is an incentive to encourage the person to work hard and to perform well. Incentives may also repel the individual and induce him or her to avoid certain outcomes. We may work not only to receive a pay cheque, but to avoid reprimands from the boss.

Rewards and punishments

Rewards and punishments are part of the Islamic system and are mentioned often in the Qur'an. Humans frequently behave in order to receive a reward or to avoid a punishment.

Many of the rewards and punishments mentioned in the Qur'an are actually delayed, not immediate. In modern psychology, this is called 'delayed gratification,' and it entails delaying small gratifications now in order to obtain larger rewards later. In Islam, this includes the rewards that Allah (ﷻ) has promised in the hereafter, which the believers earn through their correct beliefs and righteous actions in this life. The delayed punishments are those awaiting the disbelievers due to their disbelief and immoral behaviour. Of course, the rewards and punishments in the hereafter will be similar in some ways to what we have in this life, but they will be different in other ways. They are mentioned throughout the Qur'an as a reminder.

In mentioning the believers, Allah (ﷻ) says:

﴿So Allah will protect them from the evil of that Day and give them radiance and happiness, and will reward them for what they patiently endured [with] a garden [in paradise] and silk [garments]. [They will be] reclining therein on adorned couches. They will not see therein any [burning] sun or [freezing] cold. And near above them are its shades, and its [fruit] to be picked will be lowered in compliance...﴾

(Qur'an 76: 11-14)

﴿And when you look there [in paradise], you will see pleasure and great dominion. Upon them [the inhabitants] will be green garments of fine silk and brocade. And they will be adorned with bracelets of silver, and their Lord will give them a purifying drink. [And it will be said]: Indeed, this is for you a reward, and your effort has been appreciated.﴾ *(Qur'an 76: 20-22)*

﴿Indeed, those who have believed and done righteous deeds — indeed, We will not allow to be lost the reward of any who did well in deeds. Those will have gardens of perpetual residence; beneath them rivers will flow. They will be adorned therein with bracelets of gold and will wear green garments of fine silk and brocade, reclining therein on adorned couches. Excellent is the reward, and good is the resting place.﴾ *(Qur'an 18: 30-31)*

﴿But those who believe and do righteous deeds — We will admit them to gardens beneath which rivers flow, wherein they abide forever. For them therein are purified spouses, and We will admit them to deepening shade.﴾ *(Qur'an 4: 57)*

The Qur'an also uses negative reinforcement, which is an attempt to improve behaviour by removing a negative consequence. The protection from evil on the Day of Resurrection, mentioned in Soorat al-Insân, is an example of this concept, as are the removal of fear and grief. Allah (ﷻ) says:

﴿Indeed, those who have said: Our Lord is Allah, and then remained on a right course — there will be no fear concerning them, nor will they grieve.﴾ *(Qur'an 46: 13)*

﴿[To whom Allah will say]: O My servants, no fear will there be concerning you this day, nor will you grieve.﴾ *(Qur'an 43: 68)*

The greatest rewards in the hereafter will be obtaining the pleasure of Allah (ﷻ) and seeing His Face. The Messenger of Allah said: «Allah will say to the people of paradise: O people of paradise! They will say: We are at Your worship our Lord, and all goodness is in Your Hands. He will say: Are you content? They will say: Why should we not be content, O Lord, when you have given us what you have not given to anyone else of Your creation? He will say: Shall I not give you better than that? They will say: O Lord, what could be better than that? He will say: I grant you My pleasure, and I will never be displeased with you after that.» (recorded by Bukhari and Muslim)

The utmost joy will be gazing upon the Face of Allah, as He confirms:

﴿[Some] faces, that Day, will be radiant, looking at their Lord.﴾ *(Qur'an 75: 22-23)*

The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said: «When the people of paradise enter paradise, Allah will say: Do you want anything more? They will say: Have You not made our faces white (honoured us)? Have you not admitted us to paradise and saved us from the fire? Then the veil will be lifted, and they will never have been given anything more dear to them than looking at their Lord, may He be Blessed and Exalted.» (recorded by Muslim and at-Tirmidhi)

Seeing Allah's Face then is the ultimate goal for which people are striving and competing.[2]

These verses, and many others, specify that the rewards for the believers are due to their fear of Allah, righteousness, and patience in this life.[3]

﴿And that is paradise, which you are made to inherit for what you used to do.﴾ *(Qur'an 43: 72)*

They will be deserving of the rewards, but they will only enter paradise due to the mercy of Allah.

The Qur'an describes the punishment for the disbelievers, which is also deserved:

﴿Indeed, those who disbelieve in Our verses — We will drive them into a fire. Every time their skins are roasted through, We will replace them with other skins so they may taste the punishment. Indeed, Allah is ever Exalted in might and Wise.﴾ *(Qur'an 4: 56)*

﴿...Indeed, We have prepared for the wrongdoers a fire whose walls

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[2] al-Ashqar, U.S., 2002, *Paradise and Hell in the Light of the Qur'an and Sunnah,* Riyadh, Saudi Arabia: International Islamic Publishing House, p. 309.

[3] For more details, see al-Ashqar, 2002b.

will surround them. And if they call for relief, they will be relieved with water like murky oil, which scalds [their] faces. Wretched is the drink, and evil is the resting place.﴾ *(Qur'an 18: 29)*

The disbelievers and polytheists will be disgraced and denied the joy and honour of seeing the Face of Allah, which will be their greatest loss.

﴿Our Lord, indeed whoever You admit to the fire — You have disgraced him, and for the wrongdoers there are no helpers.﴾ *(Qur'an 3: 192)*

﴿No! Indeed, from their Lord, that day, they will be partitioned.﴾ *(Qur'an 83: 15)*

The individual who possesses a sound mind, true knowledge, and fear of Allah will attempt to be righteous and will strive to avoid being among the defiant losers in the hereafter. The hereafter and seeing Allah (ﷻ) are the main goals of the true believers and the primary focus of their thinking and motivation.

For further effectiveness in enhancing the motivation of humans, Allah (ﷻ) has arranged a system of recording — akin to a behaviour management system — in which an ongoing account is maintained. This is knowledge that He could have kept hidden, but in His wisdom, He revealed it to humankind in order to motivate us to do good. He also created angels who record our deeds. Each of us has two angels who are always present, who accurately record every minute detail.[4] Allah (ﷻ) says:

﴿And indeed, [appointed] over you are keepers, noble and recording; they know whatever you do.﴾ *(Qur'an 82: 10-12)*

﴿And We have already created humankind and know what his soul whispers to him, and We are closer to him than [his] jugular vein. When the two receivers [recording angels] receive, seated on the

[4] al-Ashqar, 2005, p. 68.

right and on the left. He [the human being] does not utter any word except that with him is an observer prepared [to record].﴾

(Qur'an 50: 16-18)

These verses indicate that the angels are always present and ready to record anything that we do or say. This record is the book that will be presented to each person on the Day of Judgment. The angel on the right records good deeds, while the angel on the left records bad deeds. Due to the mercy of Allah, the angels do not record a bad deed immediately; they postpone writing it for a certain time, in order to give the person an opportunity to repent. The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said: «The angel on the left holds up his pen (refrains from writing down) for six hours after a Muslim commits a sin. If the person regrets it and asks Allah for forgiveness, he casts it aside (does not write it down); otherwise he writes it down as one (bad deed).» (a reliable hadith authenticated by al-Albâni)

Achievement/competitive drive

Human beings have a desire for significant accomplishment, mastery of some element in life, and the attainment of a high standard. This concept is termed 'achievement motivation,' and it may involve a component of competition. Related to incentives is the drive to compete and surpass others in various areas, whether intellectual, economic, political, or social. While competition can have some benefits, it should not cross the limits of that allowed by Sharia. We are encouraged to focus on competition in the most important facets of life, which are righteousness and good deeds. This competition is directed towards attaining Allah's forgiveness and pleasure, and gaining entry into paradise. Allah (ﷻ) has mentioned this competition in the Qur'an:

﴿Indeed, the righteous will be in pleasure on adorned couches, observing. You will recognize in their faces the radiance of pleasure. They will be given to drink [pure] wine [which was] sealed. The last

of it is musk. So for this let the competitors compete.﴾
(Qur'an 83: 22-26)

﴿Race towards forgiveness from your Lord and a garden whose width is like the width of the heavens and earth, prepared for those who believed in Allah and His messengers. That is the bounty of Allah, which He gives to whom He wills, and Allah is the possessor of great bounty.﴾ *(Qur'an 57: 21)*

﴿And the forerunners, the forerunners — Those are the ones brought near [to Allah] in the gardens of pleasure.﴾ *(Qur'an 56: 10-12)*

The forerunners are those who were successful in the race and precede others in this life. They will precede them in the hereafter as well and gain a higher status in paradise.

Materialistic drive

It is in the nature of humankind to covet and strive for the material possessions of this life. This is related to the needs for safety and security, and freedom from poverty and deprivation. Both the Qur'an and the Hadith mention this drive:

﴿Beautified for people is the love of that which they desire — of women and children, heaped-up sums of gold and silver, fine branded horses, and cattle and tilled land. That is the enjoyment of worldly life, but Allah has with Him the best return [paradise].﴾
(Qur'an 3: 14)

﴿Know that the life of this world is but amusement and diversion, and adornment and boasting to one another, and competition in increase of wealth and children — like the example of a rain whose [resulting] plant growth pleases the tillers; then it dries and you see it turned yellow; then it becomes [scattered] debris...﴾ *(Qur'an 57: 20)*

The Prophet (ﷺ) said: «Allah has said: I have sent down money so that the prayer can be established and zakât be given. If the son of Adam had a valley (in one narration: a valley of gold), he would still

wish for another, and if he had two valleys (in one narration: two valleys of gold), he would wish for a third! Nothing will fill the inside of the son of Adam except dust, and Allah will accept the repentance of he who repents.» (a sound hadith recorded by Aḥmad and aṭ-Ṭabarâni)

From these Qur'anic verses and the hadith above, it is clear that the acquisition of wealth is one of the innate desires that Allah (ﷻ) has placed within us, and it is one that we must control. The purpose of this is to test those who have been blessed with wealth and to determine if they will earn it and make use of it in permissible ways, spend it in the cause of Allah, and be grateful for it.

In general, wealth and provisions are blessings from Allah and have already been decreed and written.

﴿And there is no creature on earth that Allah has not provided for, and He knows its place of dwelling and place of storage. All is in a clear register.﴾ *(Qur'an 11: 6)*

The provisions for a person are actually written during the time that he or she is in the womb. The Prophet (ﷺ) said: «Then the angel comes to it (the embryo), and writes down the length of his life, his deeds, (the amount) of his sustenance, and whether he will be wretched or happy (in the hereafter).» (recorded by Bukhari)

Regardless of what an individual does, it is not possible to increase or decrease the amount of provision that has been ordained. That which has been predestined will come, while that which has not been predetermined will not come.[5] This is why it is wrong to assume that we can increase our wealth by engaging in forbidden behaviours or compromising acts of worship in order to seek more earnings.[6]

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[5] Qadhi, 2002, *15 Ways to Increase Your Earnings from the Qur'an and Sunnah.* Birmingham, UK: Al-Hidaayah Publishing and Distribution, p. 16.

[6] Ibid., p. 14.

There is nothing wrong with seeking and working for wealth and worldly pleasures, but this should be done for the sake of Allah, and it should not become the focus of a person's existence. If done for the sake of Allah and in a pure manner, it may actually be considered worship for which an individual will be rewarded. In this way, it becomes a blessing; if used for forbidden purposes, it can be a curse.

The main danger with wealth is that it will become more beloved to the individual than Allah (ﷻ), making it a form of shirk. This is particularly true if acts of worship are done for the sake of acquiring worldly gain.

﴿Say [O Muhammad]: If your fathers, your sons, your brothers, your wives, your relatives, wealth which you have obtained, commerce wherein you fear decline, and dwellings with which you are pleased, are more beloved to you than Allah, His Messenger and jihad [striving] in His cause, then wait until Allah executes His command. And Allah does not guide the defiantly disobedient people.﴾

(Qur'an 9: 24)

﴿O you who have believed, indeed many of the scholars and the monks devour the wealth of people unjustly and avert [them] from the way of Allah. And those who hoard gold and silver and spend it not in the way of Allah — give them tidings of a painful torment. The day when it will be heated in the fire of hell, and seared therewith will be their foreheads, their flanks, and their backs [; it will be said]: This is what you hoarded for yourselves, so taste what you used to hoard.﴾

(Qur'an 9: 34-35)

﴿And as for humankind, when his Lord tries him and [thus] is generous to him and favours him, he says: My Lord has honoured me. But when He tries him and restricts his provision, he says: My Lord has humiliated me. No! But you do not honour the orphan, and you do not encourage one another to feed the poor. And you consume inheritance, devouring [it] altogether, and you love wealth with immense love.﴾ *(Qur'an 89: 15-20)*

The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said: «Let the slave of the *dinar* (gold coin), *dirham* (silver coin), and *khamisah* (a striped garment made of silk or wool and velvet) perish. He is pleased if these things are given to him, and if not, he is displeased. Let such a person perish and relapse, and if he is pierced with a thorn, let him not find anyone to take it out for him...» (recorded by Bukhari)

This particular hadith indicates that those who love wealth actually become slaves to that wealth. Those who are slaves to lusts and desires, and to this world, cannot be true servants of Allah. The more they love this world and all that is in it, the less they will love and dedicate themselves to Allah.

The Prophet (ﷺ) said: «The Day of Judgment has come close, and people will only increase their desire for this world, and they will only go further and further away from Allah.» (a sound hadith recorded by al-Ḥâkim)

The Prophet (ﷺ) expressed concern for his nation due to the *fitnah* (trial or temptation) of wealth. He said: «I do not fear poverty for you, but rather I fear that you will compete with one another (to see who has more possessions).» (a sound hadith recorded by al-Ḥâkim)

It is for this reason that he (ﷺ) used to pray: «O Allah! I seek refuge from the evils of the fitnah of wealth, and the evils of the fitnah of poverty.» (recorded by Bukhari and Muslim)

Aggressive drive

Humans have within them the tendency to be aggressive, particularly when provoked or in cases of self-defence. Aggression may be defined as any physical or verbal act intended to harm or damage, whether done reactively due to hostility or proactively as a premeditated means to an end.[7] The story of the creation of Adam

[7] Myers, 2007, p. 751.

(may Allah's peace be upon him) provides evidence of this tendency in humans.

﴿And [mention, O Muhammad,] when your Lord said to the angels: Indeed, I will make upon the earth a successive authority. They said: Will You place upon it one who causes corruption therein and sheds blood, while we declare Your praise and sanctify You? He [Allah] said: Indeed, I know that which you do not know.﴾ *(Qur'an 2: 30)*

For various possible reasons, the angels knew that this creation of Allah (ﷻ) would commit the atrocities that are mentioned, but Allah (ﷻ) reveals that there is wisdom in the creation of humans that is with Him alone.

Once Adam and Eve were sent from paradise to earth due to their disobedience, Allah (ﷻ) said:

﴿...Go down, [all of you], as enemies to one another, and you will have upon the earth a place of settlement and provision for a time.﴾ *(Qur'an 2: 36)*

This verse also highlights the animosity that humans sometimes have towards one another, which may lead to conflict, hostile behaviour, destruction and even murder.

In fact, the first aggressive act of one human against another occurred early in the history of the human race, with Adam's sons, Cain and Abel. Cain killed his brother Abel because of envy, which suggests that evil desires are involved in aggression as well.

﴿And recite to them the story of Adam's sons, in truth, when they both offered a sacrifice [to Allah], and it was accepted from one of them but was not accepted from the other. [The latter] said: I will surely kill you. [The former] replied: Indeed, Allah only accepts from the righteous [who fear Him]. If you should raise your hand against me to kill me, I shall not raise my hand against you to kill you. Indeed, I fear Allah, Lord of the worlds. Indeed, I want you to obtain [thereby] my sin and your sin, so you will be among the companions of the fire. And that is the recompense of wrongdoers. And his soul

permitted to him the murder of his brother, so he killed him and became one of the losers.﴾ *(Qur'an 5: 27-30)*

Aggression is influenced by both biological and environmental factors, but from the Islamic perspective, it is clear that humans can choose to control their aggressive tendencies and to engage in more pro-social behaviours. Aggression, however, does have its role in society, primarily in the institution of *jihad*. Jihad is an Arabic term that means striving, struggling, and working to improve; it can be applied to any effort exerted by a person. In an Islamic sense, the general meaning of jihad is to strive in the path of Allah or for the cause of Allah. Its purpose is to establish the religion of Islam in our hearts, in our homes, in our communities, and in our countries.

Allah says:

﴿And strive for Allah with the striving due to Him...﴾ *(Qur'an 22: 78)*

﴿And those who strive for Us — We will surely guide them to Our ways. And indeed, Allah is with the doers of good.﴾ *(Qur'an 29: 69)*

Part of this effort may involve a physical or military jihad, which would obviously entail various forms of aggression against the enemies of Islam.

﴿The believers are only the ones who have believed in Allah and His Messenger and then doubt not but strive with their properties and their lives in the cause of Allah. It is those who are the truthful.﴾ *(Qur'an 49: 15)*

﴿Fight in the way of Allah [against] those who fight you, but do not transgress. Indeed, Allah does not like transgressors. And kill them wherever you overtake them and expel them from wherever they have expelled you, and discord is worse than killing... Fight them until there is no [more] discord and [until] the religion [worship] is [acknowledged to be] for Allah. But if they cease, then there is to be no aggression [assault] except against the oppressors.﴾ *(Qur'an 2: 190-193)*

﴿And fight them until there is no discord and [until] the religion, all of it, is for Allah. And if they cease — then indeed, Allah is Seeing of what they do.﴾ *(Qur'an 8: 39)*

The most important goal of genuine jihad is to establish the worship of Allah (ﷻ) on the earth, as mentioned in these verses. He alone is deserving of our worship, and this is the only way to fulfil our true purpose in life. The main distinction, in fact, between acceptable and unacceptable aggression is in relation to the intention and goal. Allah (ﷻ) says:

﴿Those who believe fight in the cause of Allah, and those who disbelieve fight in the cause of false objects of worship. So fight against the allies of Satan. Indeed, the plot of Satan has ever been weak.﴾ *(Qur'an 4: 76)*

So the true believers fight in the cause of Allah, while the disbelievers fight for various gods or other objects of worship (which may include nationalism, democracy, power, wealth, oil and so forth).

Associated with this is the goal of making Allah's word and law supreme in the land. The Prophet (ﷺ) said: «Whoever fights in order to make the word of Allah the highest, then he is fighting for the cause of Allah.» (recorded by Bukhari) It is understandable that complete and true worship of Allah can only be realized if the religion of Islam prevails in the lives of people. Islam is the only religion that emphasizes comprehensive devotion to Allah (ﷻ) in all spheres of life, from social to economic, from family to political. The implementation of Allah's word is intricately and indelibly connected to the other goals of jihad, for fulfilment of this primary goal will naturally lead to the accomplishment of proximate ones. These other goals include the removal of injustice, oppression and tyranny, and the creation of an environment where peace and justice prevail.

Even believers who engage in jihad for the sake of Allah (ﷻ) need to ensure that the methods they use are within the limits of the

Sharia. The Qur'anic verses on jihad indicate this important element by reminding the fighters not to transgress. Women, children, and the elderly are not to be killed unless they are participating in the battle. In general, all forms of cruelty and torture are completely forbidden, including mutilation of dead bodies. Violating these limits is one of the crucial mistakes made by Muslims in our present time, and this has resulted in despicable attacks by non-Muslims in various forms throughout the world. They have taken advantage of this mistake by distorting Islam and attempting to turn people away from its true message.

Affiliative drive

The need to feel a connection with others and a sense of belonging is another innate drive within humans. People demonstrate this need to belong by seeking social relationships and social acceptance. The social security found in friendships, marriages and families leads people to be healthier and to experience lower rates of depression, suicide and early death. In contrast, those who are isolated tend to suffer more from stress and depression. We will delve into this further in the section on social psychology, but we mention it here because it is a very powerful motivating factor in people's lives.

Moderation in fulfilment of drives and motives

The fulfilment of both physiological and psychological drives is indispensable for human survival as well as for well-being and life satisfaction. Allah (ﷻ) would not create these desires within us and then expect us to suppress them completely, as we see in other religions. We must satisfy them within the limits of the Sharia, though, as prescribed by Allah, and channel them in a way that benefits the individual and the society. We must control our drives

and desires, and must not allow the desires to control us. Control entails avoiding that which is prohibited in terms of food (for example, pork), drink (for example, wine), sexual relations (for example, fornication or adultery), and so forth, as well as being moderate in the fulfilment of these needs. Eemân and taqwâ in the heart will assist us in satisfying these needs in an acceptable manner, as they will monitor what is allowed and what is prohibited based upon knowledge.

﴿O Children of Adam, take your adornment [your clothing] at every masjid, and eat and drink, but be not excessive. Indeed, He likes not those who commit excess.﴾ *(Qur'an 7: 31)*

Research has confirmed the importance of moderation in eating and drinking; we know that overeating is detrimental to physical and mental health. People who overindulge tend to be overweight, and thus more likely to suffer from chronic diseases (such as hypertension, diabetes, and heart diseases) and to die at a younger age. They are also more likely to have a poor self-image, low self-esteem, and other mental health concerns.

Even in relation to wealth, we should be moderate. This means that we should not be stingy and hold onto wealth without giving charity, but we also should not be extravagant and wasteful. Both of these extremes are common in the world today. Many people hold on to wealth for fear of losing it and falling into poverty. Others spend it in such a careless and lavish manner that it is disgraceful, particularly given the fact that millions of human beings around the world are starving.

Allah (ﷻ) describes how the believers handle their wealth:

﴿And [they are] those who, when they spend, do so not excessively or sparingly, but are constantly, between that, [justly] moderate.﴾ *(Qur'an 25: 67)*

It is interesting to look at the results of research on the relationship between wealth and happiness. This research indicates

that: "wealth is like health: its utter absence can breed misery, yet having it is no guarantee of happiness."[8] Myers presents the example of the United States. From 1957 to 1995, the after-tax income of the average citizen more than doubled, but although average Americans were richer, they were not one bit happier. In 1957, 35% said they were 'very happy,' while 34% said the same in 2004. The conclusion regarding America — as well as European countries, Australia, Japan, and China — is that: "Economic growth in affluent countries has provided no apparent boost to morale or social well-being."[9] One could argue that people in these countries are more miserable, given the increase in crime, divorce, teen suicide, and depression.

Studies have also shown that people who strive the most to gain wealth tend to have lower emotional well-being. This is especially true for those who seek money to gain power, show off, or prove themselves. Those who live with a sense of gratitude for what they have been blessed with, enjoy greater happiness.[10] This is another example of research echoing what has already been confirmed by revelation. In Islam, of course, gratitude is directed to Allah (ﷻ), the source of all our provisions.

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[8] Myers, 2007, p. 540.

[9] Ibid., pp. 540-541.

[10] Ibid., pp. 540-541.

CHAPTER SIX

Emotions

Emotions are part of the bounty given to us by Allah (ﷻ), Who says:

﴿And that it is He Who makes [one] laugh and weep.﴾

(Qur'an 53: 43)

This means that Allah has created within humans the ability to laugh and to weep, to rejoice and to brood, as well as the causes for each of these.[1] Imagine how life would be without the capacity to love or to enjoy, or even to become angry or sad. We would be like robots going about our lives without experiencing pleasure or distress. Emotions are affective experiences that have internal components (subjective feelings and physiological states) as well as external components (facial expressions and behaviour). The universality of emotions obviously indicates their innateness. The Qur'an also mentions them in several places.

Emotions are generally categorized as being either positive or negative. Positive emotions normally bring pleasure, while negative emotions imply distress. Although we often strive to experience positive emotions, even negative emotions have some purpose and

[1] Ibn Kathir, 2000, Vol. 9, pp. 336-337.

value, as when someone becomes angry for the sake of Allah (ﷻ). Anger is usually considered a negative emotion, but in this context, it has a valuable purpose and would be considered praiseworthy. ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭâb (رضي الله عنه) was well-known for expressing anger for the sake of Allah.

From the Islamic perspective, emotions are also a test from Allah (ﷻ). Success in this test means controlling the emotions and channelling them in the direction ordained by Allah. Since emotions are natural, we are not expected to eliminate them; we can still feel sadness, anger, and so on. However, there are boundaries set by Allah, as well as praiseworthy and blameworthy types or expressions of emotions.

Love

Love is a natural and ubiquitous emotion that comes in various forms and levels of intensity. We may love our spouses in one way, our parents in another way, and our children in a very different way. All of these types are from the bounty of Allah, and they are completely acceptable and encouraged, even if the objects of our love happen to be disbelievers. The only restriction is that our love for another human being (or thing, for that matter) should never exceed our love for Allah (ﷻ). What would be blameworthy would be loving someone more than we love Allah, or disobeying Allah in order to gain the love or approval of another. Our love for Allah, in fact, is unique and distinct from any other type of love.

An essential and obligatory aspect of faith is to love Allah (ﷻ), His Messenger (ﷺ), other believers, and that which Allah has determined to be good and righteous (in both beliefs and deeds). The love for Allah and His Messenger (ﷺ) must take priority over love for family members, wealth, and other worldly facets. Allah (ﷻ) says:

﴿Say, [O Muhammad]: If your fathers, your sons, your brothers, your wives, your relatives, wealth which you have obtained, commerce wherein you fear decline, and dwellings with which you are pleased, are more beloved to you than Allah and His Messenger and jihad [striving] in His cause, then wait until Allah executes His command. And Allah does not guide the defiantly disobedient people.﴾

(Qur'an 9: 24)

Loving Allah and His Messenger above everyone and everything else is a sign of true devotion that will lead to tasting the sweetness of faith. This implies that the servant obtains pleasure from being obedient to Allah (ﷻ) and coming near to Him. The Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) said: «Whoever possesses the following three qualities will taste the sweetness of faith: one to whom Allah and His Messenger become dearer than anything else; one who loves a person and he loves him only for Allah's sake; and one who hates to convert to disbelief, after Allah has brought (saved) him out of it (infidelity), as much as he hates to be thrown into the fire.» (recorded by Muslim)

The Prophet (ﷺ) also said: «None of you will have faith until he loves me more than his father, his children and all humankind.» (recorded by Muslim)

To love Allah (ﷻ) means to obey Him in what He has prescribed and to avoid disobedience. We should obey Him with enthusiastic and submissive hearts, even if it goes against our own desires. We should also love what Allah has legislated and made obligatory, and hate what Allah has forbidden. We should be eager and willing to accept and be guided by the wisdom of Allah, the Qur'an and the Sharia.

Love of the Messenger (ﷺ) entails being pleased with what he has conveyed from Allah (ﷻ) and implementing his Sunnah to the best of one's ability in daily life. As believers, we love all of the prophets, the righteous servants of Allah, and the followers of the

prophets, because they implement that which Allah loves. We should love them for the sake of Allah and take them as his allies. Alliance entails affection, assistance, and mutual support; it means to help, love, honour, respect and be devoted to.

﴿Your ally is none but Allah and [therefore] His Messenger and those who have believed — those who establish prayer and give zakât, and they bow [in worship]. And whoever is an ally of Allah and His Messenger and those who have believed — indeed, the party of Allah — they will be the predominant.﴾ *(Qur'an 5: 55-56)*

The Prophet (ﷺ) said: «The closest people to me are the God-fearing, whoever they are, wherever they are.» (a sound hadith recorded by Aḥmad)

Allah (ﷻ) describes the characteristics of those who truly love Him:

﴿O you who have believed, whoever of you should revert from his religion — Allah will bring forth [in place of them] a people He will love and who will love Him [who are] humble towards the believers, powerful against the disbelievers; they strive in the cause of Allah and do not fear the blame of a critic. That is the favour of Allah; He bestows it upon whom He wills. And Allah is all-Encompassing and Knowing.﴾ *(Qur'an 5: 54)*

The characteristics described in this verse are humility towards the believers, which indicates that they are compassionate and merciful towards their brothers and sisters in Islam; harshness and hatred towards those of the disbelievers who work to harm Muslims and Islam; striving in the path of Allah against His enemies with one's heart, soul, hand, tongue and wealth; and not fearing the reproach of anyone, as there is contentment in doing what is pleasing to Allah, unconcerned about receiving criticism or praise from other people. Understanding and accepting these principles strengthens our faith and brings us closer to Allah.

Fear

Fear is generally considered a negative emotion that occurs in response to a threat of danger or harm. This is a natural response meant to protect the human being from pain, injury, or death. Experiencing a sense of fear in worldly life leads a person to run away with dread or to avoid situations where the feared object may be present. The important point, however, is that nothing should be feared more than Allah (ﷻ).

Fear of Allah

When someone fears Allah (ﷻ), he will seek refuge in Him, try to get closer to Him and attempt to obtain His pleasure by acts of obedience. Allah (ﷻ) says:

﴿So flee to Allah...﴾ *(Qur'an 51: 50)*

This fleeing to Allah means escaping from the grasp of disbelief, shirk, and sin, by repenting and seeking the forgiveness and mercy of Allah. In effect, one is escaping from Allah's punishment and going to His mercy. One can never really run away from Allah in any sense, but only the believer knows this. "Whoever fears creation runs away from it, but whoever fears Allah runs to Him."[2]

There are many verses in the Qur'an that direct the believer to fear Allah (ﷻ) and not to fear other human beings or the creation.

Allah (ﷻ) says:

﴿O humankind, fear your Lord, Who created you from one soul and created from it its mate and dispersed from both of them many men

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[2] al-Syed, M. F., 1995, *Fear of Allah in the Light of the Quran, the Sunnah and the Predecessors*, 'Compiled from the works of Ibn Rajab al-Hanbali, Ibn al-Qayyim al-Jawziyya, and Abu Hamid al-Ghazali', (M.A. Kholwadia, Trans.), London: Al-Firdous Ltd., p. 9.

and women. And fear Allah, through Whom you ask one another, and the wombs. Indeed Allah is ever, over you, an Observer.﴾
(Qur'an 4: 1)

﴿...And fear Allah and know that Allah is with those who fear Him.﴾
(Qur'an 2: 194)

﴿But yes, whoever fulfils his commitment and fears Allah — then indeed, Allah loves those who fear Him.﴾ *(Qur'an 3: 76)*

These verses indicate that Allah will be with and will love those who fear Him. This fear is connected to submission to Allah.

﴿O you who have believed, fear Allah as He should be feared, and do not die except as Muslims [in submission to Him].﴾ *(Qur'an 3: 102)*

Fear of the Day of Judgment and hellfire

True believers also fear the Day of Judgment and the eternal punishment in the hellfire. This fear helps them to stay on the straight path and to avoid falling into disobedience.

﴿And fear a Day when no soul will suffice for another soul at all, nor will intercession be accepted from it, nor will compensation be taken from it, nor will they be aided.﴾ *(Qur'an 2: 48)*

﴿Say: Indeed, I fear, if I should disobey my Lord, the punishment of a tremendous Day.﴾ *(Qur'an 6: 15)*

﴿Indeed, we fear from our Lord a Day austere and distressful.﴾
(Qur'an 76: 10)

﴿But as for he who feared the position of his Lord [standing for account before his Lord] and prevented the soul from [unlawful] inclination...﴾ *(Qur'an 79: 40)*

﴿And fear the fire, which has been prepared for the disbelievers.﴾
(Qur'an 3: 131)

Hope

Hope is often equated with optimism, the opposite of which is pessimism. An optimist is one whose general disposition is to expect the best in all things, like seeing the glass 'half full' of water as opposed to 'half empty.' Optimism is characterized by a positive outlook in the present and the expectation of a good outcome in the future.

As believers, we should always hope that things will turn out for the best, and we should especially hope for Allah's mercy and grace.

﴿...And invoke Him in fear and aspiration. Indeed, the mercy of Allah is near to the doers of good.﴾ *(Qur'an 7: 56)*

﴿They arise from [their] beds; they supplicate to their Lord in fear and aspiration...﴾ *(Qur'an 32: 16)*

These verses signify the believers' hope for the tremendous reward that Allah (ﷻ) has promised. The believers, who remember the Day of Judgment and hope for success and rewards on that Day, will be encouraged to perform good deeds. Likewise, they will be consoled for missing out on worldly pleasures due to their hope for the rewards and delights of the hereafter, the greatest of which will be the pleasure of Allah (ﷻ) and seeing His Face.

The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said: «If a disbeliever knew of all the mercy that is in the Hands of Allah, he would not lose hope of entering paradise, and if a believer knew of all the punishment that is present with Allah, he would not consider himself safe from the hellfire.» (recorded by Bukhari)

Anas (رضي الله عنه) reported that the Prophet (ﷺ) visited a young boy who was dying. «The Prophet (ﷺ) asked: How are you? The boy replied: O Messenger of Allah, I am in between the hope of Allah and the fear of my sins. The Prophet (ﷺ) said: The like of these two qualities do not unite in the heart of a servant except that Allah gives him what he hopes for and protects him from what he fears.» (a reliable hadith recorded by at-Tirmidhi and Ibn Mâjah)

It is interesting to note that research in the area of optimism and health has indicated that people who are more optimistic and hopeful generally enjoy better physical and mental health. Optimists experience lower rates of stress and depression, lower blood pressure, a lower incidence of coronary heart disease (in men), better pulmonary function and better coping in recovery from surgery. This may be due to a number of factors, including more active and persistent coping efforts, coping with stress more effectively (emphasizing positive aspects of stressful situations), seeking social support, and having a healthier lifestyle (healthful diet and exercise).

Balancing love, fear and hope

The true believer balances the emotions of love, fear and hope, without emphasizing one to the detriment of the others. We love Allah (ﷻ) for the many blessings that He has bestowed upon us, we fear His punishment and wrath due to our sins, and we hope that He will accept our good deeds and our repentance and forgive our sins.

Ibn Rajab wrote that a Muslim who worshiped Allah out of hope alone, out of fear alone, or out of love alone would be going down a deviant path of Islam, whereas,

> ...he who worships Allah in fear, love and hope is a *Muhwahhid Mu'min* [a believer upon *Tawheed*]. A true believer in *tawheed* then will not lean toward one or another emotion of either hope, love, or fear as these deviated groups have done, for this leads to an imbalance in not only emotions but also beliefs. Rather, a balance will be maintained amongst each of these emotions so as to motivate the individual to follow the true path with the correct intention.[3]

[3] Ibn Rajab, Worshipping Allah out of love, fear, and hope, retrieved October 10, 2010 from http://abdurrahman.org/salah/worshippingallahoutof.html.

Hatred

Just as we should love Allah (ﷻ) and those who are near to Him, we should hate those who intentionally and actively oppose Allah and the religion of Islam. This hatred should be for the sake of Allah only, and should not affect us in a way that allows us to act or react irrationally. The matters that necessitate hatred include disbelief (when it is not out of ignorance), hypocrisy, innovation and sin.[4] Regarding disbelief, Allah (ﷻ) says:

﴿There has already been for you an excellent pattern in Abraham and those with him, when they said to their people: Indeed, we are dissociated from you and from whatever you worship other than Allah. We have denied you, and there has appeared between us and you animosity and hatred forever until you believe in Allah alone...﴾

(Qur'an 60: 4)

In relation to the hypocrites, who are the worst enemies of Islam, it is obligatory to detest them for Allah's sake. Allah has cursed them in the Qur'an, so it would be impossible for the true believer to have anything but hatred towards them.

﴿They have taken their oaths as a cover, so they averted [people] from the way of Allah. Indeed, it was evil they were doing. That is because they believed, and then they disbelieved; so their hearts were sealed over, and they do not understand...They are the enemy, so beware of them. May Allah destroy them; how are they deluded?﴾

(Qur'an 63: 2-4)

The same is true for the innovators and the sinners, depending on their distance from Islam.

Following from hatred would be dissociation, which means enmity or severance from something, based upon animosity and

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[4] al-Hilaalee, S., 1995, *Love and Hate for the Sake of Allah,* Birmingham, UK: Al Hidaayah Publishing and Distribution, pp. 34-36.

distance. As believers, we should distance ourselves from those who oppose Allah (ﷻ) and His Messenger (ﷺ). This may include any disbelievers, such as Jews or Christians, atheists or polytheists, who actively work to harm Muslims or Islam. There are many verses in the Qur'an that support this point.

Allah (ﷻ) says:

﴿You will not find a people who believe in Allah and the last day having affection for those who oppose Allah and His Messenger, even if they were their fathers or their sons or their brothers or their kindred. Those — He has decreed within their hearts faith and supported them with spirit from Him. And We will admit them to gardens beneath which rivers flow, wherein they abide eternally. Allah is pleased with them, and they are pleased with Him — those are the party of Allah. Unquestionably, the party of Allah — they are the successful.﴾ *(Qur'an 58: 22)*

﴿O you who have believed, do not take your fathers or your brothers as protectors if they have preferred disbelief over belief. And whoever does so among you — then it is those who are the wrongdoers. Say [O Muhammad]: If your fathers, your sons, your brothers, your wives, your relatives, wealth which you have acquired, commerce in which you fear a decline, and the dwellings with which you are pleased, are more beloved to you than Allah and His Messenger and jihad [striving] in His cause, then wait until Allah executes His command. And Allah does not guide the defiantly disobedient people.﴾ *(Qur'an 9: 23-24)*

Other disbelievers who have not received the message of Islam, or who have received the message and have not accepted it, but who do not harm the Muslims or Islam, nor do they help others to harm them, would not fall into this category.

The heart is the important component in relation to loving and hating for the sake of Allah (ﷻ). Ibn Taymiyah wrote:

> As for love and hatred in the heart, desire for or dislike of something, it must be absolute. It is not possible for this to be lacking, except if part of faith is also lacking. As for one's actions in this world, this is according to ability and circumstance. When the likes and dislikes of the heart are totally sound then one's actions will follow this, in so far as one is able to act; but the fullness of the reward is due to the sincerity of the heart.[5]

Taking the disbelievers as close companions and confidantes is a sign of weak faith. Ibn Taymiyah also stated:

> Allah has informed us that you will not find any believer seeking the affection of those who challenge Allah and His Messenger, since faith itself would prevent this, just as two opposites repel one another. So as long as there is faith, loyalty to the enemies of Allah is impossible. If someone has bound his heart to the disbelievers, then this is proof that his heart also is devoid of faith.[6]

Anger

In general, anger is considered a negative emotion that should be constrained, unless it is for the sake of Allah (ﷻ). It is part of human nature to become angry at times for various reasons, but the believers control themselves and do not act in ways that traverse the limits set by Allah. The Prophet (ﷺ) himself only became angry when the rights of Allah were violated. For example, he (ﷺ) became angry when he was told about the imam who harmed people by making the prayer too long; when he saw a curtain with pictures of animate

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[5] al-Qahtani, M. S., 1999, *Al-Wala' wa'l-Bara' According to the Aqeedah of the Salaf (Part 2),* London: Al-Firdous, Ltd., p. 86.

[6] Yasin, 1997

creatures in the home of ‘Â’ishah (ﷺ); and when Usâmah (ﷺ) spoke to him about a woman who had stolen, hoping to mitigate her sentence. In this last case, the Prophet (ﷺ) said: «Do you seek to intervene concerning one of the punishments prescribed by Allah?» (recorded by Bukhari and Muslim)

In relation to anger, Allah (ﷻ) describes the believers in the following manner:

﴿Who spend [in the cause of Allah] during ease and hardship, and who restrain anger and who pardon the people — and Allah loves the doers of good.﴾ *(Qur’an 3: 134)*

﴿And those who avoid the major sins and immoralities, and when they are angry, they forgive.﴾ *(Qur’an 42: 37)*

Abu Hurayrah (ﷺ) reported: «I heard Allah’s Messenger (ﷺ) saying: One is not strong because of one’s wrestling skillfully. They said: Allah’s Messenger, then who is strong? He said: He who controls his anger when he is in a fit of rage.» (recorded by Muslim)

Abu Hurayrah (ﷺ) reported that the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said: «The strong one is not the one who overcomes people by his strength, but the one who controls himself while in anger.» (recorded by Bukhari and Muslim)

Abu Hurayrah (ﷺ) reported that: «A man said to the Prophet (ﷺ): Advise me. He said: Do not become angry. The man repeated his request several times, and each time the Prophet (ﷺ) told him: Do not become angry.» (recorded by Bukhari)

The Prophet (ﷺ) described several cures for the disease of anger and methods to limit its effects upon the human. The most important of these is to seek refuge with Allah (ﷻ) from Satan, who whispers to the humans to turn anger into rage. Sulaymân ibn Sard (ﷺ) said: «I was sitting with the Prophet (ﷺ), and two men were slandering one another. One of them was red in the face, and the veins on his neck were standing out. The Prophet said: I know a statement which, if he were to say it, what he feels would go away. If he said: ‘I seek

refuge with Allah from the Satan, the outcast,' what he feels would go away.» (recorded by Bukhari and Muslim)

The Prophet (ﷺ) also said: «If a person gets angry and says: 'I seek refuge with Allah,' his anger will go away.» (recorded by Bukhari)

Keeping silent and changing position are other methods to control anger. The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said: «If any of you becomes angry, let him keep silent.» (a sound hadith recorded by Aḥmad) Keeping silent is important because an angry person often loses self-control and might voice words of disbelief, or curse or slander another person, or pronounce divorce against his spouse. By keeping silent, he will avoid harming himself and his loved ones, and he will limit the enmity and hatred that can develop between those who have a disagreement.

The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said: «If any of you becomes angry and he is standing, let him sit down, so his anger will go away; if it does not go away, let him lie down.» (a sound hadith recorded by Aḥmad) Sitting or lying down will prevent the angry person from losing control and using physical means to harm another individual or property, which may lead to injury or death or destruction. A person often regrets what happens during fits of anger, so it is best to avoid negative repercussions if possible.

The believer should also remember the rewards for controlling anger. The Prophet (ﷺ) said: «Whoever controls his anger at the time when he has the means to act upon it, Allah will fill his heart with contentment on the Day of Resurrection.» (a sound hadith recorded by aṭ-Ṭabarâni)

It is interesting to note the research that has been conducted regarding the relationship between anger and health. Anger and hostility are strongly implicated as risk factors for coronary heart disease and as potential triggers for heart attacks. Anger is also implicated in hypertension and, to a lesser degree, in stroke and

diabetes.[7] So in addition to the psychological and social consequences of anger, there are also physical implications; being angry much of the time is simply not good for one's health. Following the Prophet's Sunnah in this regard would have obvious health benefits.

Summary regarding emotions

We can learn to control emotions by increasing our belief and faith. The Qur'an indicates that those who follow Allah's guidance will be rewarded with a reduction in negative emotions; this is one of the blessings that Allah (ﷻ) bestows upon His believing slaves. Allah (ﷻ) says:

﴿We said: Go down from it, all of you. And when guidance comes to you from Me, whoever follows My guidance — there will be no fear concerning them, nor will they grieve.﴾ *(Qur'an 2: 38)*

We will discuss this topic further in another section.

[7] Taylor, S., 2006, *Health Psychology (6th Ed.)*, Boston, MA: McGraw-Hill, p. 348.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Intelligence, Reason and Wisdom

In contemporary psychology, intelligence is defined as the ability to learn from previous experiences, to solve problems, and to use knowledge to manage novel situations.[1] While both genetics and environment have an influence upon intelligence, genetics seem to be a stronger factor, based upon research studies. The Intelligence quotient (IQ) is an individual's score on a test that assesses intellectual abilities in the areas of general knowledge, comprehension, vocabulary, arithmetic reasoning, working memory, perceptual organization, and processing speed. Scores on intelligence tests are fairly stable and consistent across the lifespan, particularly after the age of seven years.

Another popular contemporary theory of intelligence is Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences. Gardner proposes that we have eight different intelligences, each relatively independent of the others. This theory goes beyond the previously mentioned standard intelligence tests that primarily focus on verbal and mathematical aptitudes. Each individual is strong in certain of these intelligences while weaker in others. Of the eight multiple intelligences, these seven are relevant to our discussion:[2]

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[1] Myers, 2007, p. 431.

[2] Ibid., p. 434.

- ❖ Linguistic: ability to use language, sensitivity to the order of things.
- ❖ Logical-mathematical: intelligence of numbers and logic, ability to handle chains of reasoning and to recognize patterns and order.
- ❖ Musical: sensitivity to pitch, melody, rhythm, and tone.
- ❖ Bodily-kinaesthetic: ability to use the body skilfully and to handle objects adeptly.
- ❖ Spatial: ability to perceive the world accurately and to recreate or transform aspects of that world.
- ❖ Interpersonal: ability to understand people and relationships.
- ❖ Intrapersonal: access to one's emotional life as a means of understanding oneself and others.

Reason (ʻaql) in Islam

The focus of contemporary discourse on the topic of intelligence is primarily the present life and enhancing our abilities in order to achieve higher levels of education and more status and power. This contrasts with the conceptualization in the Islamic perspective, which concentrates on spiritual understanding. The word for intellect in the Arabic language is *ʻaql*; it can be defined in a number of ways, including reason, understanding, comprehension, discernment, insight, rationality, mind, or intellect.[3]

This is the instinctive faculty given to humans by Allah (ﷻ), by which we comprehend the reality of our existence and this world.[4] It

[3] Wehr, 1974, p. 630.

[4] Ibn Taymiyyah, 2005, *The Decisive Criterion between the Friends of Allah and the Friends of Shaytan*, Birmingham, UK: Daar Us-Sunnah Publishers, p. 217.

is mentioned several times in the Qur'an. Allah (ﷻ) says:

﴿And they [disbelievers] will say: If only we had been listening or reasoning [*na'qil*], we would not be among the companions of the blaze.﴾ *(Qur'an 67: 10)*

﴿...Indeed in that are signs for a people who reason [*ya'qiloon*].﴾ *(Qur'an 13: 4)*

Those who use their 'aql are able to reason and rationalize to arrive at the truth.

One of the five universal necessities that should be preserved in Islam is mind or reason. (The others are faith, life, lineage, and property). Islam emphasizes reason; it is the basis upon which humans are held accountable for their choices. It is also the characteristic that elevates the human being above the rest of Allah's creation, if that gift is used appropriately.

Islamic law is designed in such a way as to preserve reason and intellect and to ensure its well-being and freedom. Islam prohibits the use of any substance that may affect the mind negatively or decrease its ability in any way. Allah (ﷻ) says:

﴿O you who have believed, indeed, intoxicants, gambling, [sacrificing on] stone altars [to other than Allah], and divining arrows are but defilement from the work of Satan, so avoid it that you may be successful. Satan only wants to cause between you animosity and hatred through intoxicants and gambling and to avert you from the remembrance of Allah and from prayer. So will you not desist?﴾ *(Qur'an 5: 90-91)*

Allah (ﷻ) actually curses those who engage in this behaviour. Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) said: «Gabriel (عليه السلام) came to me and said: O Muhammad! Verily, Allah, the Almighty, the All-Powerful has cursed wine and the one who makes it, the one who drinks it, the one who transports it, the one to whom he transports it, the one who sells it, the one who buys it, the one who pours it and the one for whom it

is poured.» (a sound hadith recorded by Aḥmad and Ibn Ḥibbân) The legal punishment is also severe, due to the dangers that these substances pose for the individual and the society.

The rational mind must also be protected against the influence of false beliefs, superstitions and deceit. This is one of the reasons that fortune-telling, witchcraft, magic and the like are forbidden in Islam. Humans become deluded and tricked by these fraudulent practices, and their beliefs become distorted as a result. As believers, we should not delve into matters of the unseen of which we have no knowledge, because this may lead to confusion and doubt.

Islam encourages us to develop our intellects, to contemplate, and to follow rational arguments and proofs. 'Freedom of thought' is a blessing bestowed upon us by Allah (ﷻ), but it must be within constraints. Thoughts or proclamations of thoughts cannot be outside the boundaries prescribed by the Sharia, and reason itself can never be given a status above that of revelation. While the vast majority of the religion is logical, we cannot try to explain everything by logic alone because it has its limits. There are some things that are simply beyond the capacity of the human mind to comprehend because the knowledge given to us is restricted. In fact, it is very minute in comparison to the knowledge of Allah (ﷻ). In general, the Qur'an and Hadith should be our guides for understanding the world and developing appropriate beliefs.

Knowledge

Knowledge is obviously important in relation to thoughts and beliefs, which is why it has a high status. We could not actually utilize our intellect to make sound decisions without having knowledge. Knowledge, of course, is also acquired through use of the mind. We come to know the specifics of right and wrong, permissible and forbidden, through gaining knowledge. While our

natural disposition is to worship Allah alone, it would be impossible for us to do so correctly without detailed information.

The significance of knowledge

The position of knowledge in Islam is denoted by the first revelation given to Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) by the angel Gabriel:

﴿Recite in the name of your Lord who created — created man from a clinging substance. Recite, and your Lord is the most Generous — Who taught by the pen — taught man that which he knew not.﴾ *(Qur'an 96: 1-5)*

As mentioned in an earlier chapter, Allah (ﷻ) created Adam (عليه السلام) with the ability to name objects, an ability that He did not give to the angels. This capacity to learn and comprehend makes us unique from the rest of Allah's creation and is directly connected to our free will. It would literally be impossible to make choices without the ability to gain knowledge.

The Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) said: «The seeking of knowledge is compulsory on every Muslim (male and female).» (recorded by Muslim) This responsibility to acquire knowledge continues throughout our lifetime unless we lose the ability to think or reason (through disease or old age).

The sincere quest for knowledge will assist us in finding the straight path in life and staying firm upon it. Without true and correct knowledge, our journey through life would be haphazard and unsuccessful. The importance of this is emphasized frequently in the Qur'an and Hadith:

﴿...Only those fear Allah, from among His servants, who have knowledge.﴾ *(Qur'an 35: 28)*

﴿And these examples We present to the people, but none will understand them except those of knowledge.﴾ *(Qur'an 29: 43)*

﴿...Say: Are those who know equal to those who do not know? Only

they will remember [who are] people of understanding.﴾

(Qur'an 39: 9)

﴿...Allah will raise those who have believed among you and those who were given knowledge, by degrees...﴾ *(Qur'an 58: 11)*

The Prophet (ﷺ) said: «If Allah wants to do good to a person, He makes him comprehend the religion [understand the Qur'an and the Sunnah of the Prophet].» (recorded by Bukhari)

He (ﷺ) also said: «A person who starts his journey to acquire knowledge, Allah eases his passage to paradise, and angels spread their wings to express their appreciation for his acts. All the creatures that are in the heavens and on the earth, including the fish in the water, ask for forgiveness for a learned person. A learned person is superior to a worshipper as the full moon is superior to all the stars. The learned are heirs of the prophets, and the prophets do not leave any inheritance in the shape of dirhams (silver) and dinars (gold), but they do leave knowledge as their legacy. Such a person who acquires knowledge, acquires his full share.» (a sound hadith recorded by Abu Dâwood and at-Tirmidhi)

These Qur'anic verses and hadiths highlight the superiority and distinction of gaining knowledge and also teaching it to others, as it is associated with many advantages and virtues. It is one of the noblest endeavours that a human can engage in, and the rewards that can be achieved are immense. A person, in fact, is incapable of achieving a high status without knowledge.

The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said: «The example of guidance and knowledge with which Allah has sent me is like abundant rain falling on the earth, some of which was fertile soil that absorbed rainwater and brought forth vegetation and grass in abundance. (And) another portion of it was hard and held the rainwater; Allah benefited the people with it, and they used it for drinking [making their animals drink from it] and to irrigate the land for cultivation. (And) a portion of it was barren; it could neither hold the water nor

bring forth vegetation [so that land gave no benefit]. The first is the example of the person who comprehends Allah's religion and gets benefit (from the knowledge) that Allah has revealed through me and learns and then teaches it to others. The (last example is that of a) person who does not care for it and does not accept Allah's guidance that was revealed to me.» (recorded by Bukhari)

This hadith highlights the fact that there are three categories of people in relation to knowledge. The first category includes those who acquire knowledge of the Qur'an and Hadith, act upon it, and also convey it to others. Such people benefit from this knowledge themselves, in addition to extending this benefit to others. By virtue of this quality, they are the best of all. The second group consists of those people who acquire knowledge and impart it to others, but do not fulfil the requirements of that knowledge. Such people are inferior in rank to the people of the first category and can be held responsible for their omissions. The last category comprises those who eschew the knowledge of the Qur'an and Hadith. They neither study nor listen for their own benefit, nor do they acquire knowledge to impart it to others. This is the worst category of people.

The Prophet (ﷺ) also stated: «Do not wish to be like anyone except in two cases. The first is a person to whom Allah has given wealth, and he spends it righteously; the other is one to whom Allah has given wisdom (the knowledge of the Qur'an and Sunnah), and he acts according to it and teaches it to others.» (recorded by Bukhari)

Envy is only permissible in these two cases, due to the high status of these actions and attributes. Envy is when someone determines that another person has been graced by Allah (ﷻ) with certain gifts and qualities, and then he or she also desires to be blessed with those gifts. The person does not complain or despair about not having them but instead supplicates to Allah for them. 'Wisdom' in this hadith refers to wisdom of the Qur'an and Hadith, which is knowledge that is the most beneficial for the human being. It is through this knowledge that we can make correct judgments.

It has also been reported that the Prophet (ﷺ) said to ‘Ali (رضي الله عنه): «By Allah, if a single person is guided by Allah through you, it will be better for you than a whole lot of red camels.» (recorded by Bukhari and Muslim) ‘Better for you than red camels’ is a metaphor meaning better than anything else. In Arabia at the time of the Prophet (ﷺ), red camels were very precious. They are referred to in this hadith to highlight the value of guidance and the distinction of calling people to Allah (ﷻ) and Islam. Before calling others to the path of Allah, though, one must have knowledge; the knowledge of the Qur’an and Hadith is crucial for this purpose because one cannot provide any guidance without this knowledge.

The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said: «The world, with all that it contains, is accursed except for the remembrance of Allah, that which pleases Allah, and the religious scholars and seekers of knowledge.» (a reliable hadith recorded by at-Tirmidhi and Ibn Mâjah) This hadith indicates that things of this world are cursed if they make a person negligent of the remembrance of Allah. It could also mean that this world is cursed for those who do not remember Allah for even one single moment in their life. Knowledge is essential because the slave must know what will gain the pleasure of Allah (ﷻ) and what will invite His displeasure. It is for this reason that both the teacher and the learner have been included in the exemptions from this curse.

«The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said: The superiority of the learned person over the devout worshipper is like my superiority over the most inferior amongst you (in good deeds). He went on to say: Allah, His angels, the dwellers of the heaven and the earth, and even the ant in its hole and the fish (in water) supplicate in favour of those who teach people knowledge.» (a reliable hadith recorded by at-Tirmidhi)

‘Learned person’ here means a scholar of the Qur’an and Hadith, who adheres to the obligatory acts and the Sunnah and remains diligent in learning and imparting knowledge. The devout

worshipper is one who spends most of his or her time in the worship of Allah (ﷻ). This hadith emphasizes the distinction of religious scholars and the esteem in which they are held by Allah (ﷻ), His angels and other creatures on the earth. Allah (ﷻ) bestows mercy upon the person who teaches people beneficial knowledge (knowledge of Islam), angels pray to Allah (ﷻ) to forgive his or her sins, and other creatures pray for his or her well-being. One of the reasons that the scholar is superior to the worshipper is that the benefit of the knowledge of the scholar reaches others in the community, while the benefits of worshipper's voluntary prayer and remembrance of Allah are restricted to himself or herself.

The meaning of knowledge

We have already mentioned that the Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) said: «The seeking of knowledge is compulsory on every Muslim (male and female).» (recorded by Muslim) Unfortunately, this hadith is often misunderstood to refer to all types of knowledge, both religious and worldly. The Prophet (ﷺ), however, was specifically referring to religious knowledge, which includes knowing Allah, His names and attributes, the purpose of our creation, how to worship and obey Allah, and how our choices will affect us in the hereafter.

It is important to understand the distinction between knowledge that is an individual obligation versus that which is a communal obligation. Knowledge that is obligatory for each individual includes basic knowledge of the religion, such as understanding of the Qur'an and Hadith, beliefs ('aqeedah), religious injunctions (prayer, fasting, charity, social relations and the like), and knowledge of the lawful and the unlawful. Knowledge that is compulsory on the community only needs to be learned by some members of the Muslim society; the obligation is relieved once it is fulfilled by some members of the community, but if no one in the community fulfils the obligation, then everyone in the community will be held accountable for not

learning it. This category would include detailed knowledge of Islam and the Sharia, medicine, engineering, education, and so forth.

The concept of wisdom

Throughout the centuries, humankind has discussed and debated the meaning and purpose of life, and how to attain wisdom in the process. In secular terms, wisdom has been defined as the ability to make sound choices and appropriate decisions. It is intelligence shaped by experience, or information softened by profound understanding and deep insight. It is often accompanied by extensive formal knowledge, but worldly knowledge is not a necessary condition for wisdom. As noted in an earlier discussion, the secular focus has been on intelligence and knowledge, with little mention of the spiritual dimension.

It should be mentioned, however, that there have been recent attempts to define what is termed 'spiritual intelligence.' This has been defined as the adaptive use of spiritual information to facilitate everyday problem-solving and goal attainment.[5] The following are hypothesized to be components of spiritual intelligence:

1. Capacity to transcend the physical and mental.
2. Ability to experience heightened states of consciousness.
3. Ability to sanctify everyday experience.
4. Ability to utilize spiritual resources to solve problems.
5. Capacity to be virtuous.[6]

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[5] Emmons, R. A., 2000, Is spirituality an intelligence? Motivation, cognition, and the psychology of ultimate concern, *The International Journal of the Psychology of Religion, 10,* p. 3.

[6] Ibid., p. 10.

This definition of spirituality is a broad one, encompassing various forms of beliefs and practices. The Islamic perspective focuses on the spiritual and religious meaning of wisdom based upon revelation from the All-Knowing.

The wisdom of Allah

In Islam, there is a clear understanding that ultimate wisdom comes from Allah (ﷻ), for He is the All-Wise, All-Knowing. This is stated in the Qur'an in several places:

﴿And whoever earns [commits] a sin only earns it against himself. And Allah is ever Knowing and Wise.﴾ *(Qur'an 4: 111)*

﴿And to Him belongs [all] grandeur within the heavens and the earth, and He is the Exalted in Might, the Wise.﴾ *(Qur'an 45: 37)*

﴿And indeed, your Lord will gather them; indeed He is Wise and Knowing.﴾ *(Qur'an 15: 25)*

﴿Our Lord, and admit them to gardens of perpetual residence which You have promised them and whoever was righteous among their fathers, their spouses and their offspring. Indeed, it is You who is the exalted in might, the Wise.﴾ *(Qur'an 40: 8)*

Humans should never presume that they have more wisdom than Allah (ﷻ), for this is a form of shirk which can lead to dire consequences. In reality, the 'wisdom' possessed by humans is only a derivative of the supreme wisdom of Allah (ﷻ). He grants this wisdom to whom He wills, and He withholds it from whom He wills.

Wisdom in the Qur'an

The Qur'an is one of the means through which humans may acquire a portion of the wisdom available from Allah (ﷻ). There are several verses telling us that the Qur'an is a book full of wisdom:

﴿By the wise Qur'an.﴾ *(Qur'an 36: 2)*

﴿Indeed, We have made it an Arabic Qur'an that you might understand. And indeed, it is, in the Mother of the Book with Us, exalted and full of wisdom.﴾ *(Qur'an 43: 3-4)*

The wisdom of the Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ)

The Prophet (ﷺ) was given a special portion of Allah's wisdom, for he was a Prophet and a chosen messenger. This wisdom is captured in the Hadith and the Sunnah of the Prophet (ﷺ), which are also revelation from Allah. The wisdom of the Prophet (ﷺ) was placed in his heart by Gabriel. The Prophet (ﷺ) said: «While I was at the House [of Allah in Makkah, the Kaaba], in a state midway between sleep and wakefulness, (an angel recognized me) as the man lying between two men. A golden tray full of wisdom and belief was brought to me, and my body was cut open from the throat to the lower part of the abdomen. Then my abdomen was washed with *Zamzam* water (from a well located near the Kaaba), and (my heart was) filled with wisdom and belief.» (recorded by Bukhari)

This wisdom given to the Prophet (ﷺ) is mentioned in the Qur'an in several places, usually along with the book or scripture, which is the Qur'an:

﴿It is He Who has sent among the unlettered a Messenger from themselves reciting to them His verses and purifying them and teaching them the Book [the Qur'an] and wisdom [the Sunnah] — although they were before in clear error.﴾ *(Qur'an 62: 2)*

﴿...And Allah has revealed to you the book and wisdom and has taught you that which you did not know. And ever has the favour of Allah upon you been great.﴾ *(Qur'an 4: 113)*

﴿...And remember the favour of Allah upon you and what has been revealed to you of the book [the Qur'an] and wisdom [the Prophet's Sunnah] by which He instructs you...﴾ *(Qur'an 2: 231)*

﴿And [recall, O People of the Scripture], when Allah took the covenant of the prophets [saying]: Whatever I give you of the

scripture and wisdom and then there comes to you a messenger confirming what is with you, you [must] believe in him and support him...﴾ *(Qur'an 3: 81)*

This wisdom of the Prophet (ﷺ) is in reality his Sunnah, which all Muslims are obligated to adhere to and implement in their lives. The Prophet (ﷺ) was the most superb example of what it means to live as a wise human being. There may be wisdom in practicing the Sunnah that we are not even aware of, but we do this because of the command of Allah (ﷻ). Allah (ﷻ) knows what is most beneficial for us and has only prescribed those things that will bring us goodness during our stay on this earth.

The wisdom of Luqmân

Luqmân (عليه السلام) is another example of a human endowed with wisdom as mentioned in the Qur'an, and he is presented as a pattern to follow. Luqmân (عليه السلام) refused a worldly kingdom and power and instead was of a humble rank in life, being a slave or a carpenter. To him, as in Islam, true human wisdom emanated from divine wisdom. The beginning of all wisdom, therefore, is conformity with the will of Allah (ﷻ). This means that we must understand our relation to Him and worship Him properly. Luqmân (عليه السلام) possessed this profound understanding.

﴿And We had certainly given Luqmân wisdom [and said]: Be grateful to Allah. And whoever is grateful, is grateful for [the benefit of] himself. And whoever denies [His favour] — then indeed, Allah is free of need and praiseworthy.

And [mention, O Muhammad], when Luqmân said to his son while he was instructing him: O my son, do not associate [anything] with Allah. Indeed, association [with Him] is great injustice.

And We have enjoined upon man [care] for his parents. His mother carried him, [increasing her] in weakness upon weakness, and his weaning is in two years. Be grateful to Me and to your parents; to Me

is the [final] destination.

But if they endeavour to make you associate with Me that of which you have no knowledge, do not obey them but accompany them in [this] world with appropriate kindness and follow the way of those who turn back to Me [in repentance]. Then to me will be your return, and I will inform you about what you used to do.

[And Luqmân said]: O my son, indeed if it [a wrong] should be the weight of a mustard seed and should be within a rock or [anywhere] in the heavens or in the earth, Allah will bring it forth. Indeed, Allah is Subtle and Acquainted.

O my son, establish prayer, enjoin what is right, forbid what is wrong, and be patient over what befalls you. Indeed, [all] that is of the matters [requiring] determination.

And do not turn your cheek [in contempt] towards people and do not walk through the earth exultantly. Indeed, Allah does not like anyone self-deluded and boastful.

And be moderate in your pace, and lower your voice; indeed, the most disagreeable of sounds is the voice of donkeys.﴾

(Qur'an 31: 12-19)

These verses detail the specifics of wisdom and how it is applied in life. The truly wise person is one who comprehends these instructions and follows them completely and willingly. These are the guidelines for a contented and fulfilling life.

People of understanding

Allah (ﷻ) grants this wisdom to whom He wishes; these people are called 'people of understanding' in the Qur'an. To have this gift is a true blessing from Allah (ﷻ).

﴿He gives wisdom to whom He wills, and whoever has been given wisdom has certainly been given much good. And none will remember except those of understanding.﴾ *(Qur'an 2: 269)*

Allah (ﷻ) mentions:

﴿Then has it not become clear to them how many generations We destroyed before them as they walk among their dwellings? Indeed in that are signs for those of intelligence.﴾ *(Qur'an 20: 128)*

The Arabic word used here means intelligence, understanding, or reason. This verse indicates that those who read these stories and extract the lessons from them are considered to be people with intelligence and understanding.

In reality then, wisdom is not intelligence or comprehension of worldly matters. Wisdom is rather submission to Allah (ﷻ) and whatever He has enjoined upon us. Wisdom is surrendering ourselves completely to Allah and trusting in His wisdom and all-encompassing knowledge. It is humbly appreciating that the wisdom we have is only a portion of that possessed by the ultimate possessor of wisdom, and that it was given to us as a blessing.

CHAPTER EIGHT

Learning and Modelling

Learning is defined as: "A relatively permanent change in an organism's behavior due to experience."[1] This definition emphasizes the behavioural component of learning, but we can also learn information by reading and acquiring knowledge, as discussed in a previous section. This endeavour is of a cognitive nature, but ultimately the knowledge that we obtain should have an influence upon our behaviour.

Allah (ﷻ) mentions the tools that He has bestowed upon humans in order to learn.

﴿And Allah has extracted you from the wombs of your mothers not knowing a thing, and He made for you hearing and vision and hearts [meaning intellect] that perhaps you would be grateful.﴾

(Qur'an 16: 78)

This verse indicates that humans are born without any knowledge (other than the fiṭrah). Allah (ﷻ) provides them with senses as well as intellect, so that they may learn from the world around them and thus be grateful to Allah for His bounty. Humans learn by observing, experiencing, reading, listening, and so forth.

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[1] Myers, 2007, p. 313.

The Qur'an itself is one of the greatest learning tools; it presents knowledge in a variety of formats and contains the most essential lessons for life. The various methods that Allah (ﷻ) uses throughout the Qur'an to enhance learning include:

1. Direct speech in the form of reprimand or exhortation
2. Dialogue in a logical manner, leading to a conclusion
3. Parables to clarify concepts and provide models
4. Descriptions of rewards and punishments to motivate humans towards good behaviour and to keep them away from evil deeds
5. Repetition of important concepts and principles.

Classical and operant conditioning

According to secular behaviourist theory, which focuses on behaviour and environmental influences, learning occurs by two main processes: classical conditioning and operant conditioning. Classical conditioning involves the learning of associations between two stimuli: a neutral stimulus will come to elicit a response due to pairing with an unconditioned (natural) stimulus. For example, if a mother rings a dinner bell to call the children for lunch, they may initially not have any clue about the meaning of the bell and may hesitate; over time, as the bell is paired with food, they will run immediately for the feast.

Operant conditioning is a type of learning that occurs due to consequences that follow behaviour. Specifically, behaviour is strengthened if followed by a reinforcer (something desirable), or diminished if followed by a punisher (something undesirable). Giving a child candy for cleaning his room would be an example of reinforcement, while spanking the same child for breaking a vase would be punishment.

In general, these principles are helpful in understanding certain types of behaviours as well as their environmental influences. However, they are limited due to their inability to explain all types of learning and behavioural phenomena. Human behaviour is too complex to be reduced to mere environmental factors. They also ignore the important role of cognition, volition and choice. One of the consequences of following their line of thinking is to take away responsibility from the individual. This is contrary to the Islamic conceptualization, in which free will and accountability are primary features.

Spiritual modelling

Learning may also occur through modelling. Modelling, or observational learning, is the process of observing and imitating a specific behaviour in another individual. Scientists have actually discovered mirror neurons in the frontal lobe area of the brain that provide a neural basis for this type of learning.[2] Obviously, models are most effective when their words and actions are consistent.

Albert Bandura, a social learning theorist, has written extensively on the concept of modelling in psychology. He stated that:

> The power of example to activate and channel behavior has been abundantly documented... One can get people to behave altruistically, to volunteer their services, to delay or to seek gratification, to show affection, to behave punitively, to prefer certain foods and apparel, to converse on particular topics, to be inquisitive or passive, to think innovatively or conventionally, and to engage in almost any course or action by having such conduct exemplified.[3]

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[2] Ibid., p. 341.

[3] Bandura, A., 1986, *Social Foundations of Thought and Action,* Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, p. 206.

Spiritual modelling is a recent development in the area of observational learning. In spiritual modelling, it is understood that humans may grow spiritually by imitating the life or conduct of a spiritual exemplar, either someone of the past (a prophet) or the present (a religious family or community member).[4] A key to this phenomenon is observational spiritual learning, in which the individual learns spiritually relevant skills or behaviours through observing others.[5]

The Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) provides the ideal spiritual model for achieving inner serenity and well-being through the practices prescribed in Islam, as well as an overall philosophy and approach to life. Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) was given the status of a final and universal role model for Muslims until the end of time. His example is one of exceptional morality, righteous behaviour and character, and outstanding skills, all of which are characteristics that reflect his position as a Prophet.[6]

The Holy Qur'an literally refers to Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) as a role model:

﴿There has certainly been for you in the Messenger of Allah an excellent pattern for anyone whose hope is in Allah and the Last Day and [who] remembers Allah often.﴾ *(Qur'an 33: 21)*

The Arabic word translated here as 'pattern' means an example or model that should be obeyed and followed. A person who follows another imitates their behaviour, attitude and style. This verse shows the importance of Prophet Muhammad's Sunnah (way or path) in the lives of Muslims, who practice his way in almost every aspect of their life.

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[4] Oman, D., & Thoreson, C.E., 2003, Spiritual modeling: A key to spiritual and religious growth?, *The International Journal for the Psychology of Religion, 13 (3),* p. 150.

[5] Ibid.

[6] al-Mubarakpuri, S., 1996, *The Sealed Nectar: Biography of the Noble=*

Following the Prophet's Sunnah is a form of obedience to Allah. Allah (ﷻ) mentions:

﴿He who obeys the Messenger has obeyed Allah, but those who turn away — We have not sent you over them as a guardian.﴾

(Qur'an 4: 80)

Any knowledge that came from the Messenger was inspired by Allah (ﷻ), and several verses in the Qur'an order the Muslims to follow and obey the Prophet (ﷺ):

﴿O you who have believed, obey Allah and His Messenger, and do not turn away from him while you hear [his order].﴾ *(Qur'an 8: 20)*

﴿...And whatever the Messenger has given you — take; and what he has forbidden you — refrain from it...﴾ *(Qur'an 59: 7)*

﴿And obey Allah and the Messenger, that you may obtain mercy.﴾

(Qur'an 3: 132)

﴿Say: Obey Allah and obey the Messenger. But if you turn away — then upon him is only that [duty] with which he has been charged, and upon you is that with which you have been charged. And if you obey him, you will be [rightly] guided. And there is not upon the Messenger except the [responsibility for] clear notification.﴾

(Qur'an 24: 54)

These last two verses indicate that the person who obeys the Prophet (ﷺ) will be upon the correct guidance and will receive mercy from Allah (ﷻ).

It is an obligation to follow the Sunnah of the Prophet (ﷺ) to the best of one's ability. During his farewell pilgrimage, the Prophet (ﷺ) said: «I have left among you two matters that, if you adhere to them, you will never be misguided: the Book of Allah and the Sunnah of His Prophet.» (a sound hadith recorded by Mâlik, al-Ḥâkim and al-Bayḥaqi)

=*Prophet*, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia: Dar-us-Salam Publications, pp. 496-503.

The Prophet (ﷺ) also said: «The Children of Israel divided into seventy-two religious sects. My nation will divide into seventy-three sects, and all of them will be in the fire except one. They said: And who is that one, O Messenger of Allah? He replied: (The one following) what I and my Companions are upon.» (a reliable hadith recorded by at-Tirmidhi)

The Sunnah of the Prophet (ﷺ) is reported through the hadiths; it consists of his sayings, actions, and silent approvals. These are considered inspiration from Allah (ﷻ) and are second only to the Qur'an in terms of significance and evidence. The Prophet's Sunnah has been preserved in books, the most famous of which are the authentic hadith collections of Bukhari and Muslim. The Prophet's Companions (may Allah be pleased with them) recorded or memorized his statements and actions, which were transmitted from generation to generation by scholars. A strict methodology of Hadith classification was developed to distinguish authentic hadiths from those that were weak or fabricated.

Four processes have been suggested to regulate observational learning in general, and these processes can likewise be applied to observational spiritual learning:[7]

— **Attention** is fostered by social and cultural patterns that draw attention to spiritual exemplars.[8] In the case of Islam, for example, Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) is remembered in each of the five daily prayers, consistently bringing the worshipper's attention to the importance of following his example.

— **Retention** entails repetition of the biographical events and teachings of spiritual exemplars to foster memory of modelled behaviours. This may occur, for example, through

[7] Bandura, 1986, pp. 51-55; Oman and Thoreson, 2003, p. 154.

[8] Oman and Thoreson, 2003, p. 154.

rituals or transmission of verbal traditions.[9] In Islam, a clear example of this process would be studying the hadiths of the Prophet (ﷺ) as well as his life story.

— **Reproduction** occurs when an individual enacts what is learned in daily life and attempts to refine skills over time.[10] Examples of this in Islam would obviously be following the Sunnah of the Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) in many aspects of life, such as the five daily prayers, daily supplications, good conduct, and so on.

— **Motivation**, the final process, focuses on the rewards that will be obtained for persisting in the spiritual quest.[11] References to the peace and rewards that are promised to the believers are prevalent in the Islamic tradition.

[9] Ibid.
[10] Ibid.
[11] Ibid., p. 155.

CHAPTER NINE

Trials and Tribulations of Life

Life has been determined by Allah (ﷻ) to be an experience of tests and tribulations, difficulty and trials. Allah (ﷻ) actually tests us with both good and evil. He says:

﴿Every soul will taste death. And We test you with evil and with good as a trial; and to Us you will be returned.﴾ *(Qur'an 21: 35)*

Human existence is destined to be one of trials, one following the other in succession. All things on the earth, in fact, are part of the divine test that Allah has put forth for us; hardship and ease, wealth and poverty, good and bad... all are meant to be tests.

Times of crisis are particularly likely to awaken our spiritual side and to uncover the fiṭrah that has been buried by false beliefs, principles, ideals and behaviours. During these times, we are likely to call upon Allah (ﷻ) to save us from hardship and suffering. Allah (ﷻ) reminds us of this fact:

﴿And when affliction touches man, he calls upon Us, whether lying on his side or sitting or standing; but when We remove from him his affliction, he continues [in disobedience] as if he had never called upon Us to [remove] an affliction that touched him. Thus is made pleasing to the transgressors that which they have been doing.﴾

(Qur'an 10: 12)

﴿It is He who enables you to travel on land and sea until, when you are in ships and they sail with them by a good wind and they rejoice therein, there comes a stormy wind and the waves come upon them from everywhere and they assume that they are surrounded [doomed], supplicating Allah, sincere to Him in religion: If You should save us from this, we will surely be among the thankful. But when He saves them, at once they commit injustice upon the earth without right. O humankind, your injustice is only against yourselves, [being merely] the enjoyment of worldly life. Then to Us is your return, and We will inform you of what you used to do.﴾ *(Qur'an 10: 22-23)*

From the perspective of Islam, tribulations are not meant to oppress us, but instead to assist us in realizing the truth of our existence and our potential for spiritual growth. Although on the surface they may appear to be evil or bad, tribulations are in reality something good and beneficial. Out of His mercy, Allah only ordains good for the human being. Our inability to understand events in the world from our limited human perspective does not denote the absence of higher purposes and goals. Some patterns of events are recognizable and have clear cause and effect, while other things may not be clear. The wisdom behind these is beyond our comprehension.

Allah mentions in the Qur'an:

﴿...But perhaps you hate a thing and it is good for you; and perhaps you love a thing and it is bad for you. And Allah knows, while you know not.﴾ *(Qur'an 2: 216)*

This particular verse was revealed in relation to jihad, which is something that is very difficult, even for the believers. The same verse states:

﴿Fighting has been enjoined upon you while it is hateful to you...﴾ *(Qur'an 2: 216)*

Events that seem to be bad may turn out to be best for us, while events that look good on the surface, and which we desire, may turn

out to be harmful. The tremendous benefits and rewards of jihad far outweigh the struggle that the fighter is required to engage in.

Research in psychology has revealed that religious coping is commonly used by people in times of stress; personal faith and religious communities are the primary means by which people cope. Religious coping is generally defined as the "Process that people engage in to attain significance and meaning in stressful circumstances."[1] It may give meaning to life and explain such concepts as suffering, good versus evil, guilt and forgiveness. People are more likely to rely upon religion as the consequences of a situation become more serious.

Purpose of trials and afflictions

From the perspective of Islam, one of the purposes of these tests is to distinguish those who submit from those who refuse — in other words, to separate the believers from the disbelievers. Allah (ﷻ) mentions:

﴿Do the people think that they will be left to say: We believe, and they will not be tried? But We have certainly tried those before them, and Allah will surely make evident those who are truthful, and He will surely make evident the liars.﴾ *(Qur'an 29: 2-3)*

Research in the area of post-traumatic growth supports the reality of this Qur'anic verse. Exposure to trauma leads to a change in the strength of religious faith, either by causing an individual to abandon/weaken his faith[2] or to embrace it even more.[3] Through the

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[1] Pargament, K. I., 1997, *The Psychology of Religion and Coping: Theory, Research, Practice*, New York: Guilford Publications, p. 90.

[2] Falsetti, S. A., Resick, P. A., & Davis, J. L., 2003, Changes in religious beliefs following trauma, *Journal of Traumatic Stress 16*(4), p. 392.

[3] Linley, P. A., & Joseph, S., 2004, Positive change following trauma and adversity: A review, *Journal of Traumatic Stress, 17*(1), p. 11.

process of struggling with adversity, changes may occur that push the individual to a higher level of functioning than that which existed before the trauma.[4]

The purpose of trials is not for Allah (ﷻ) to find out something that He does not know, for Allah is All-Knowing. His knowledge encompasses everything that has happened in the past and that will occur in the future. Allah (ﷻ) already knows into which group each human will fall, and thus He knows who will go to paradise and who will enter the hellfire. The purpose of these tests is to serve as a fulfilment of Allah's complete justice and mercy on the Day of Judgment. Some people will be sent to the hellfire due to the choices that they made in this life, while others will go to paradise due to their submission and obedience to Allah. In fact, humans only enter paradise due to Allah's grace and mercy, not by their deeds alone.

The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said: «The deeds of any of you will not save you (from the hellfire). They said: Even you (will not be saved by your deeds), O Messenger of Allah? He said: No, even I (will not be saved) unless and until Allah protects me with His grace and His mercy.» (recorded by Bukhari)

Part of Allah's mercy is to increase the reward for good deeds. In any case, no one will be able to argue about where he or she is placed.

Any type of pain or suffering that an individual experiences in this life may also serve as expiation for sins or lead to an increase in good deeds and rewards. In either case, there is benefit for the one who suffers. Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) said: «No fatigue, nor disease, nor sorrow, nor sadness, nor hurt, nor distress befalls a Muslim, even if it were the prick he receives from a thorn, but that Allah expiates some of his sins for that.» (recorded by Bukhari and Muslim)

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[4] Ibid.

For those who have sinned or transgressed the limits set by Allah (ﷻ), trials may serve as punishment for their transgressions. This is also a mercy from Allah because it provides an opportunity for repenting and turning back to Allah. The punishment in this life is less severe than the punishment in the hereafter. As such, the calamities of this world are meant to serve as reminders for those who have strayed from the straight path.

Allah (ﷻ) mentions:

﴿Corruption has appeared throughout the land and sea by [reason of] what the hands of people have earned so He [Allah] may let them taste part of [the consequence of] what they have done, that perhaps they will return [to righteousness].﴾ *(Qur'an 30: 41)*

﴿And We will surely let them taste the nearer punishment short of the greater punishment, that perhaps they will return [repent].﴾ *(Qur'an 32: 21)*

The nearer punishment here refers to the tribulations, disasters and calamities of this life.

This is beneficial for us in terms of the hereafter, since on the Day of Judgment, we will be judged according to our deeds. Those whose scale of good deeds is heavy will be successful, while those whose scale is light will be in despair. Allah (ﷻ) has a purpose or plan behind the tribulations, which is mainly to elevate us in the hereafter, either saving us from the hellfire or raising our status in paradise.

The general purpose of all this is to assist us in purification of the soul. An analogy may be made to the relationship between fire and gold. Fire is like the tribulation that separates our noble spiritual qualities (the gold) from our impurities (human weaknesses, desires and sins). If the impurities are allowed to remain, the soul will continue to be tainted and will be unable to achieve its maximum potential in terms of spiritual growth.

Since the hereafter is the believer's main goal, understanding these concepts will lead us to be patient and even grateful to Allah (ﷻ). Remembering the temporal nature of this world, and the rewards that will be obtained, helps to ease the burden. In the end, the trials and tribulations benefit us if we are patient and demonstrate reliance upon Allah (ﷻ). We will have the hope of earning rewards from Allah (ﷻ) for submitting to Him and the events that He has planned.

As a result of a test, our faith should increase, we should be closer to Allah, and our mental health should be stronger. We will obtain the benefits if we are patient and rely upon Allah to ease the burden.

Allah (ﷻ) mentions in the Qur'an:

﴿And We will surely test you with something of fear and hunger and a loss of wealth and lives and fruit, but give glad tidings to the patient, who, when disaster strikes them, say: Indeed, we belong to Allah, and indeed to Him we will return. Those are the ones upon whom are blessings from their Lord and mercy. And it is those who are the [rightly] guided.﴾ *(Qur'an 2: 155-157)*

The Prophet (ﷺ) said: «No Muslim is struck with an affliction and then says, 'Truly, to Allah we belong and truly, to Him we shall return,' when the affliction strikes, and then says, 'O Allah! Reward me for my loss and give me what is better than it,' but Allah will do just that.» (recorded by Muslim)

As-Saalih outlined five lessons[5] that could be learned from experiencing tests in life:

1. Increasing worship of Allah, faith, and reliance upon Allah: A person realizes that he or she is weak and without power or strength, other than that given by Allah, so he or she will

[5] as-Saalih, S., 2006, Testing, affliction, and calamities, retrieved October 26, 2010 from http://albaseerah.org/forum/showthread.php?t=4151.

turn to Him and depend upon Him. The individual's comprehension of tawḥeed will be enhanced, and his or her eemân will be augmented.

2. Understanding the reality of this life: That life is at times one of joy and amusement, yet at other times one of toil and struggle. The tests remind us of the temporal and trivial nature of this life, so that we do not become too attached to it.

3. Remembering Allah's decree: Allah (ﷻ) says: ﴿No disaster strikes upon the earth or among yourselves except that it is in a register before We bring it into being — indeed that, for Allah, is easy — In order that you not despair over what has eluded you and not exult [in pride] over what He has given you. And Allah does not like everyone self-deluded and boastful.﴾ *(Qur'an 57: 22-23)* This verse reminds us to avoid being joyful for something to the point of pride and arrogance or being sad to the point of despair, as everything happens by the will and decree of Allah.

4. Remembering shortcomings and diseases: ﴿What comes to you of good is from Allah, but what comes to you of evil [O humankind] is from yourself. And We have sent you [O Muhammad] to the people as a messenger, and sufficient is Allah as a witness.﴾ *(Qur'an 4: 79)* This is important so that steps may be taken to remedy them before one is held accountable in the hereafter. Punishment in the hereafter is more severe than the calamities and hardships of this life. ﴿And whatever strikes you of disaster — it is for what your hands have earned; but He pardons much.﴾ *(Qur'an 42: 30)* This verse indicates that Allah is Forgiving and Merciful. He also tests us so that we may repent and return to Him. ﴿And We will surely let them taste the nearer punishment [disasters and calamities of this world] short of the greater

punishment, that perhaps they will return [repent].﴾ *(Qur'an 32: 21)*

5. Acquiring patience: Being firm upon the truth and obedience requires patience, as does refraining from falsehood and disobedience. ﴿But none is granted it except those who are patient, and none is granted it except one having a great portion [of good].﴾ *(Qur'an 41: 35)*

During his or her lifetime, the believer will be either in a state of gratitude to Allah (ﷻ) or a state of being patient. The Prophet (ﷺ) said: «The affair of the believer is amazing in that it is always good for him, and this is true only for a believer. If something joyful comes to him, he gives thanks, and that is good for him. If something harmful comes to him, he is patient, and that is good for him.» (recorded by Muslim)

Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyah phrased it in this way:

> There is neither strength nor power save in Allah Almighty. It is Allah we implore — and whose answer we await — to watch over you in this world and the next, to shower you with His graces, outwardly and inwardly, and to make you among those who, when blessed, give thanks; when tried, persevere; and when sinful, seek forgiveness. For these three conditions are tokens of the servant's happiness, and the signs of his success in this world and the next. No servant is without them, but is always shifting from one to the other.
>
> The first condition is the blessings which come to the servant from Allah (Most High), one after another. What secures them is gratitude (*shukr*), based on three supports: inward recognition of the blessing; outward mention and thanks for it; and its use in a way that pleases the One to whom it truly belongs and who truly bestows it. Acting thus, the servant shows his gratitude for the blessing — however brief.

> The second is the trials from Allah (Most High) which test the servant, whose duty therein is patient perseverance (*ṣabr*) and forbearance to restrain himself from anger with what is decreed; to restrain his tongue from complaint; to restrain his limbs from offences, such as striking one's face in grief, rending one's clothes, tearing one's hair and like acts. Patience, then, rests on these three supports, and if the servant maintains them as he should, affliction will become benefaction, trial will change to bounty and what he disliked will become what he loves. For Allah (Exalted and Sublime) does not try the servant in order to destroy him. Rather, He tries him to put his patience and devotion [*'uboodiyyah*] to the test. For the servant owes devotion to Allah in affliction as in ease. He must have as much devotion in what he hates as in what he loves, and while most people offer devotion in what they love, it is important to do so in the things they hate. It is by this that servants' ranks are distinguished and their stations determined.[6]

Shaykh Ibn al-Uthaymeen stated that people afflicted with calamities could be divided into four categories in terms of their reactions to the difficult situation:[7]

1. Discontent (prohibited), which entails being angry with Allah and becoming upset with the decree of Allah (invoking destruction, tearing clothes, slapping cheeks)
2. Patience (obligatory), which means that they attempt to bear it, and although they detest it, their faith keeps them from being in the first category of discontent
3. Acceptance (preferred), indicating that the presence of the

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[6] al-Jawziyyah, 2000, pp. 1-2.

[7] Ibn al-Uthaymeen, M. S., In Times of Calamity, People Divide into Four Levels, retrieved October 25, 2010 from http://abdurrahmanorg.wordpress.com/2010/08/29/in-times-of-calamity-people-divide-into-four-levels/.

tribulation is not hard upon them, and it is the same for them whether it is present or absent

4. Gratitude, which is the highest level of being thankful to Allah for the hardship, as they realize the benefits that may be attained, such as removal of sins, increasing rewards, and so on.

Benefits of religious coping

Religious coping is associated with both physical health and mental health-related outcomes in a variety of critical life situations, including illness, victimization, war, and the death of a loved one.[8] It adds to health and well-being beyond the effects of non-religious coping on its own.[9] Pargament suggests that religious coping methods mediate the relationship between the person's general religious view and the results of major life events, meaning that religious beliefs and practices have to be translated into specific forms of coping.[10] These coping methods have direct implications on the health of the individual during stressful situations.

The suggested benefits of spirituality at the time of coping also include providing a source of comfort and means of healing from the traumatic experience; offering hope and optimism; giving meaning and purpose to the event; providing a framework for coming to grips with limits of personal knowledge, control, and resources; offering an external framework of control; and providing a way to 'transcend' the experience.

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[8] Pargament, K. I., Smith, B. W., Koenig, H. G., & Perez, L., 1998, Patterns of positive and negative religious coping with major life stressors, *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion, 37*(4), p. 710.

[9] Pargament, 1997, pp. 279-288.

[10] Ibid.

Researchers have determined that a particular type of religious coping, collaborative religious coping, has the most benefit for the individual's physical and mental health. Collaborative religious coping involves seeking control through partnership with God in problem-solving.[11] This means that the person relies upon God, while at the same time attempting to do his or her part to change or cope with the situation. Other methods, such as deferring (when the individual takes a passive role in coping efforts and waits for God to control the situation) and self-directing (seeking control through individual initiative rather than help from God), have been found to produce mixed results, including possible exacerbation of conditions.[12]

It is of interest to note that the Islamic concept of reliance upon Allah (ﷻ) is similar to the collaborative form of religious coping, although Muslims view Allah (ﷻ) as above the situation and obviously possessing more power and control than they do. He is, in fact, All-Powerful. Collaborative religious coping focuses on a partnership with God, seemingly at the same level, which is contrary to Islamic beliefs. However, the idea of taking action and relying upon Allah at the same time is present in Islam.

Allah (ﷻ) mentions:

﴿...And whoever relies upon Allah — then He is sufficient for him. Indeed, Allah will accomplish his purpose. Allah has already set for everything a [decreed] extent.﴾ *(Qur'an 65: 3)*

﴿Rely upon Allah; and sufficient is Allah as disposer of affairs.﴾ *(Qur'an 33: 3)*

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[11] Pargament et al., 1998, p. 711.

[12] Fabricatore, A. N., Handal, P. J., Rubio, D. M., & Gilner, F. H., 2004, Stress, religion, and mental health: Religious coping in mediating and moderating roles, *The International Journal for the Psychology of Religion, 14*(2), p. 104; Pargament et al., 1998, pp. 711-712.

Reliance upon Allah (ﷻ), particularly during times of stress and difficulty, also involves one's taking action through the means created by Allah, within the limits of the Sharia, towards the desired outcome. At the same time, one trusts and depends upon Allah, who is All-Powerful and All-Mighty. Relying upon Allah in this way will lead to the most beneficial results, both in this life and in the hereafter. In the Islamic perspective, reliance upon Allah does not mean either abandoning the means to achieve an end or abandoning hope in Allah's mercy and relying upon oneself. Both reliance upon Allah and action must be combined.

Reliance upon Allah (ﷻ) is also connected to belief in His qadr. Allah (ﷻ) mentions:

﴿No disaster strikes upon the earth or among yourselves except that it is in a register before We bring it into being — indeed that, for Allah, is easy — In order that you not despair over what has eluded you, and not exult [in pride] over what He has given you...﴾

(Qur'an 57: 22-23)

Unfortunately, following a tribulation and its associated spiritual growth, humans often return to the same condition that they were in before they were tested. This fact is mentioned in several of the verses at the beginning of this chapter. Allah (ﷻ) also mentions their return to disbelief after adversity:

﴿And if We let him taste mercy from Us after an adversity which has touched him, he will surely say: This is [due] to me, and I do not think the Hour will occur; and [even] if I should be returned to my Lord, indeed, for me there will be with Him the best...﴾

(Qur'an 41: 50)

Allah (ﷻ) continues to test humans to give us sufficient opportunities to repent and return to Him.

CHAPTER TEN

Consciousness, Sleep and Dreaming

Consciousness is generally defined as our awareness of ourselves, others, and our environment. Conscious processing allows us to perform voluntary tasks, to reason, to solve problems and to communicate with others. At times, we also unconsciously process information, particularly when we perform tasks automatically, such as driving a car. Our sensory systems and neural pathways register information, but since we do not focus on this activity, we are not 'consciously' aware of it.[1]

While we may have slightly 'altered' states of consciousness while we are awake, such as daydreaming or drowsiness, Islam enjoins clarity of mind and thinking as essential to functioning in life. It is for this reason that alcohol and drugs, or any substance or activity that significantly alters this consciousness and the related ability to reason, are prohibited. Hypnosis, some forms of meditation and yoga, and various practices of some Sufi orders would fall into this prohibited category.

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[1] Myers, 2007, pp. 271-273.

Sleep

As discussed earlier, sleep is one of the physiological needs of the human. Sleep is the opposite of wakefulness and thus on the other end of the consciousness continuum. While an individual will not be held accountable for deeds during sleep, sleep actually becomes a form of worship when it is done for the sake of Allah (ﷻ), with the purpose of restoring the body's energy sufficiently to enable the person to engage in further acts of worship.

Allah (ﷻ) mentions that the purpose of sleep is to rest the body:

﴿And made your sleep [a means for] rest.﴾ *(Qur'an 78: 9)*

Sleep is important for a variety of reasons. Science has confirmed the importance of sleep and rest, both physically and psychologically. Sleep helps the body to recuperate after a long day of work and effort, by restoring and repairing brain tissue; this is why we wake up in the morning feeling refreshed and energized. Research also indicates that sleep is important for concentration, storage of memories, creativity, problem-solving, and mood. Physically, sleep strengthens the body by boosting immune cells and fortifying the disease-fighting immune system.[2]

Sleep is actually considered a sign from Allah (ﷻ). He mentions:

﴿And of His signs is your sleep by night and day and your seeking of His bounty. Indeed in that are signs for a people who listen.﴾ *(Qur'an 30: 23)*

As a sign from Allah (ﷻ), sleep is likened to death and is considered to be the lesser death. Waking up in the morning is like a resurrection. When a person sleeps at night, the soul is taken by the angels. Allah (ﷻ) decides whose soul is returned to the body and whose is not. If Allah (ﷻ) wishes to keep a soul while the person is

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[2] Ibid., pp. 280-283.

sleeping, He does so, and if He wills that a person should remain in this life, He returns the soul until the decreed time of death.[3]

﴿And it is He who takes your souls by night [when you sleep] and knows what you have committed by day. Then He revives you therein [by day] that a specified term may be fulfilled. Then to Him will be your return; then He will inform you about what you used to do.﴾ *(Qur'an 6: 60)*

﴿Allah takes the souls at the time of their death, and those that do not die [He takes] during their sleep. Then He keeps those for which He has decreed death and releases the others for a specified term. Indeed in that are signs for a people who give thought.﴾ *(Qur'an 39: 42)*

Sleep etiquette

Muslims have been instructed to follow certain practices of the Prophet (ﷺ) prior to sleeping. These include making ablution and sleeping on the right side of the body. The Prophet (ﷺ) said: «When you go to your bed, then perform the same ablution that you perform for prayer. Next, lie down on your right side, and then say: O Allah, I submit my soul unto You, and I entrust my affair to You...» (recorded by Bukhari and Muslim)

It is not obligatory to perform ablution, but it is recommended for several reasons. It is better to be in a state of purity prior to sleep in case your soul is taken at night and not returned. You would then die in a pure state. Also, when sleeping with purity, dreams tend to be more truthful, and you will be protected from the harm of Satan.[4] Sleeping on the right side is also strongly encouraged and has scientifically been found to have certain health benefits, including less pressure on the heart, aiding in digestion, and generally being

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[3] al-Ashqar, 2002a, pp. 28-29.

[4] ash-Shulboob, F. A., 2003, *The Book of Manners*, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia: Darussalam, p. 280.

better for the back. Several hadiths indicate that sleeping on the stomach is disliked.

The person who is retiring for the night should also read specific chapters or verses from the Qur'an, as well as supplications, in order to protect against evil forces during the night. These include the last three chapters of the Qur'an (al-Ikhlâs, al-Falaq, and an-Nâs), *âyat al-Kursi* ('the verse of the footstool', *Qur'an 2: 255*), the last two verses of Soorah al-Baqarah, and others.

'Â'ishah (ﷺ) said: «When the Prophet (ﷺ) would retire to his bed every night, he would gather his hands together and then blow into them. Then he would read in them: Say (O Muhammad): He is Allah, the One [Soorat al-Ikhlâs], Say: I seek refuge with (Allah) the Lord of the daybreak [Soorat al-Falaq], Say: I seek refuge with (Allah) the Lord of humankind [Soorat an-Nâs]. Then he would wipe them over as much of his body as he was able to, beginning with them over his head, his face, and the front part of his body. He did that three times.» (recorded by Bukhari)

There are several supplications that may be used, including the one mentioned in the following hadith:

The Prophet (ﷺ) said: «When one of you retires to his bed, let him dust off his bed with the side of his lower garment, for indeed, he does not know what came on it after he left it (the last time). Next, let him lie down on his right side, and then let him say: In Your name, my Lord, I lie down, and in Your name I rise, so if You should take my soul, then have mercy upon it, and if You should return my soul, then protect it in the manner You do so with Your righteous servants.» (recorded by Bukhari and Muslim)

Dreaming

There are many contemporary theories regarding dreams, but these are inconclusive because dreams can only be verified by the

dreamer and are not conducive to scientific enquiry. It is for this reason that true knowledge of dreams can only really come from the Creator. In Islam, dreams can be considered a form of inspiration. In fact, revelation to Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) initially came in the form of dreams, and Prophet Abraham (عليه السلام) had a dream about sacrificing his son Ishmael (عليه السلام).[5]

A hadith of the Prophet (ﷺ) explains that dreams are of three types, or from three sources. He (ﷺ) said: «When the Day of Resurrection approaches, the dream of a Muslim hardly fails to come true, and the truest dream will be of him who is the truest among you. And a dream of a believer is one of the forty-five parts of prophethood. There are three types of dreams:

1. Glad tidings from Allah,
2. what is suggested by Satan to frighten the dreamer,
3. the reflection of the thoughts and experiences one has during wakefulness. If someone has a dream which he dislikes, he should not tell it to others but should get up and perform prayer.» (recorded by Muslim)

The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said: «A good dream is from Allah, so if you see a dream which you like, you should not tell it to anybody except those whom you love. And if you see a dream which you dislike, then you should seek refuge with Allah from its evil and from the evil of Satan, and spit three times (on your left) and do not tell anybody about it, then it will not harm you.» (recorded by Muslim)

These hadiths indicate the etiquette that should be followed after experiencing certain dreams. If you see a good dream, you should be joyful and inform only those whom you love. Following a bad dream, you should spit three times to the left side and seek refuge in Allah

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[5] See Qur'an 37: 102

from the accursed Satan and from the evil of the dream. There is also evidence to indicate that you should change sides (if lying on the left, turn around and lie on the right side) or even stand up and pray, as recorded in Muslim. Finally, you should not inform anyone about these bad dreams. The purpose of these steps is to prevent the dream from causing you harm.

Dream interpretation

Only select individuals among the servants of Allah (ﷻ) are given the capability to interpret dreams. Prophets were one of the categories of people given this favour. Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) would often listen to and interpret the dreams of his Companions, usually after the morning prayer.[6] It is recorded in Bukhari and Muslim that when the Prophet (ﷺ) finished saying his prayer, he would turn around and ask his Companions whether any of them had had a dream at night.

It should be noted that the Prophet (ﷺ) was only able to interpret dreams due to knowledge given to him from Allah (ﷻ) via the angel Gabriel. It was not from his own knowledge or guesswork, but rather from true revelation. For this reason, his interpretations were accurate.

Prophet Joseph (عليه السلام) was an expert in dream interpretation. This is mentioned in the chapter named after him.

﴿My Lord, You have given me [something] of sovereignty and taught me of the interpretation of dreams...﴾ *(Qur'an 12: 101)*

Joseph (عليه السلام) interpreted the dreams of his companions in prison, and also that of the king, which resulted in saving many lives from a great famine.

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[6] Philips, A. A. B., 1996, *Dream Interpretation According to the Qur'an and Sunnah,* Sharjah, UAE: Dar Al Fatah, p. 38.

﴿And [subsequently] the king said: Indeed, I have seen [in a dream] seven fat cows being eaten by seven [that were] lean, and seven green spikes [of grain] and others [that were] dry. O eminent ones, explain to me my vision, if you should interpret dreams. They said: [It is but] a mixture of false dreams, and we are not learned in the interpretation of dreams. But the one who was freed and remembered after a time said: I will inform you of its interpretation, so send me forth. [He said:] Joseph, O man of truth, explain to us about seven fat cows eaten by seven [that were] lean, and seven green spikes [of grain] and others [that were] dry — that I may return to the people [the king and his court]; perhaps they will know [about you]. [Joseph] said: You will plant for seven years consecutively; and what you harvest leave in it spikes, except a little from which you will eat. Then will come after that seven difficult [years] which will consume what you had advanced [saved] for them, except a little from which you will store. Then will come after that a year in which the people will be given rain, and in which they will press [olives and grapes].﴾

(Qur'an 12: 43-49)

Philips outlines five principles regarding the interpretation of dreams:[7]

1. Dreams may be interpreted by other than the prophets.
2. Interpretation should only be provided for good dreams.
3. Good dreams should only be given positive interpretations.
4. Only the interpretations of prophets were 100% accurate; interpretation by other humans may be either correct or incorrect.
5. It is permissible to implement what has been seen in a good dream.

[7] Ibid., pp. 43-49.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

Human Lifespan Development

The process of human development is mentioned several times in the Qur'an:

﴿And certainly did We create man from an extract of clay. Then we placed him as a sperm-drop in a firm lodging [the womb]. Then We made the sperm-drop into a clinging clot, and We made the clot into a lump [of flesh], and We made [from] the lump, bones, and We covered the bones with flesh; then We developed him into another creation. So blessed is Allah, the best of creators.﴾ *(Qur'an 23: 12-14)*

These processes of development within the uterus have been confirmed by science.

﴿O people, if you should be in doubt about the resurrection, then [consider that] indeed, We created you from dust, then from a sperm-drop, then from a clinging clot, and then from a lump of flesh, formed and unformed — that We may show you. And We settle in the wombs whom We will for a specified term, then We bring you out as a child, and then [We develop you] that you may reach your [time of] maturity. And among you is he who is taken in [early] death, and among you is he who is returned to the most decrepit [old] age so that he knows, after [once having] knowledge, nothing. And you see the earth barren, but when We send down upon it rain, it quivers and

swells and grows [something] of every beautiful kind.﴾
(Qur'an 22: 5)

The analogy of a plant is actually provided to refer to the stages and changes of growth, but it also provides an example of death and resurrection:

﴿And Allah has caused you to grow from the earth a [progressive] growth.﴾ *(Qur'an 71: 17)*

Humans develop and grow throughout their lifespan. This development occurs in many facets, including spiritual, psychological, emotional, intellectual, social, and physical. The main focus of development in the Islamic sense is spiritual or moral, with importance given to nurturance of a relationship with Allah (ﷻ) and development of a righteous character. The other aspects of development should contribute to one's spiritual advancement in various ways. As such, all of these components are inseparable, and they reinforce each other.

Allah (ﷻ) indicates in the Qur'an that development occurs in progressive stages from conception until death. These stages have been pre-determined and pre-designed by Allah as part of the human experience. If Allah has determined this, it must have a purpose.

Allah (ﷻ) says:

﴿What is the [matter] with you that you do not attribute to Allah [due] grandeur while He has created you in stages?﴾ *(Qur'an 71: 13-14)*

﴿[That] you will surely experience state after state.﴾ *(Qur'an 84: 19)*

These verses indicate that humans will go through these successive stages, from prenatal to infancy, to childhood, to adolescence, to early adulthood, to middle adulthood, to late adulthood. However, while the general pattern is there, there will be differences in terms of variables, processes, experiences, limitations, and timeframes. Some people have been endowed with intellectual abilities that may lead them to advance more quickly in this area;

others may be born with mental handicaps, such that their physical development progresses, but their intellectual development remains the same.

Some of whom we are may remain the same, but the greater part seems to change with each passing moment. It is interesting to note that Allah (ﷻ) provides us with the skills and abilities that are needed for each stage of life. Young children, for example, are interested in play; at the age of three or four, they begin to develop mental representations (pictures) that allow them to engage in imaginative and pretend play. Their social skills also mature so that they may engage with their peers. In the area of cognitive development, adolescents develop skills for abstract and hypothetical thinking just at the same time that Allah (ﷻ) begins to hold them accountable for their choices and decisions.

We are influenced by many factors in our lives, including parents, siblings, peers, teachers and the media, which will be discussed in the social psychology section. It is not possible to cover the complete area of developmental psychology in this book, but we will touch upon a few areas.

The importance of bonding and breastfeeding

Allah (ﷻ) says:

﴿Mothers shall nurse [breastfeed] their children two complete years for whoever wishes to complete the nursing [period]. Upon the father is their [the mothers'] provision and their clothing according to what is acceptable. No person is charged with more than his capacity. No mother should be harmed through her child, and no father through his child. And upon the [father's] heir is [a duty] like that [of the father]. And if they both desire weaning through mutual consent from both of them and consultation, there is no blame upon either of them. And if

you wish to have your children nursed by a substitute, there is no blame upon you as long as you give payment according to what is acceptable. And fear Allah and know that Allah is Seeing of what you do.﴾ *(Qur'an 2: 233)*

﴿And We have enjoined upon man [care] for his parents. His mother carried him, [increasing her] in weakness upon weakness, and his weaning is in two years. Be grateful to Me and to your parents; to Me is the final destination.﴾ *(Qur'an 31: 14)*

At the time of the Prophet (ﷺ), women were encouraged to breastfeed, but they undoubtedly had no idea of the amazing qualities of this simple fluid that flowed from a woman's breast. Throughout the years, scientists have begun to discover the true nature of breast milk and the innumerable benefits that are bestowed upon both the mother and the baby — not only in the substance itself, but also through the process of breastfeeding. The many physical benefits include: providing the baby with adequate nutrition unique to his or her needs, passing antibodies from the mother to the baby to give protection from illness and disease, enhancing jaw and teeth development through sucking, decreasing the risk of allergies and infections, and many more. These may have positive effects on other areas of the child's development as well (social, cognitive and psychological). It is interesting to note that the World Health Organization recommends exclusive breastfeeding up to six months of age, with continued breastfeeding along with appropriate complementary foods up to two years of age or beyond.[1]

Probably even more significant are the psychological benefits of breastfeeding. Breastfeeding is an essential and natural component in the process of conception, pregnancy and mothering. The mother who breastfeeds experiences the tremendous blessings of fulfilling

[1] World Health Organization, Breastfeeding, retrieved October 5, 2009 from http://www.who.int/topics/breastfeeding/en/.

her natural role. Through this phenomenon, mother and baby bond together in a special relationship unlike any other, one that resists the strongest attempts to break it. This bonding and attachment is critical for later development. Studies have clearly shown that the degree of attachment at age one provides a preview of the child's social and personality development in the years to come. Securely attached infants tend to become children who interact with adults in appropriate ways and who are more competent in a wide array of social and cognitive abilities. Insecure infants are more likely to display problems in later years, such as aggressiveness, overdependence and an increased likelihood of becoming delinquent during adolescence. Allah knows the importance of the mother-child relationship and provides a wonderful mechanism through which to cement this bond.

The aging process

﴿And he to whom We grant long life We reverse in creation; so will they not understand?﴾ *(Qur'an 36: 68)*

﴿Allah is the One Who created you from weakness, then made after weakness strength, then made after strength weakness and white hair. He creates what He wills, and He is the Knowing, the Competent.﴾ *(Qur'an 30: 54)*

Throughout the lifespan, a process called senescence occurs; this is the gradual decline in physical functioning related to age. One of the most widely accepted theories in the area of developmental psychology is that aging is a normal and natural occurrence, incorporated into the genetic plans of all species. Although this may seem obvious, there have been other attempts to explain how and why aging occurs. Evidence for this theory comes from the finding that every species seems to have a genetically determined maximum lifespan. While the average life expectancy for humans has increased,

the maximum lifespan has remained stable (approximately 120 years). There is also research to suggest that at an early age, our genes trigger hormonal changes in the brain and regulate the cellular reproduction and repair process. At some point in the process, the genes that promote growth are 'switched off,' and those that promote aging are turned on. This leads to a steady decline in the functioning of the body until death occurs. One may see changes not only in physical functioning, but in the cognitive, emotional and psychological domains as well. The descriptions in the Qur'an of these phenomena are precise, highlighting the various stages of human development.

The death experience

Death is the opposite of life; it is when the bond between the body and soul is severed, with the soul separating from the body and moving into another realm.[2] Every being with a soul must die, as stated in the Qur'an:

﴿Every soul will taste death, and you will only be given your [full] compensation on the Day of Resurrection...﴾ *(Qur'an 3: 185)*

﴿And We did not grant to any man before you eternity [on earth]; so if you die — would they be eternal? Every soul will taste death. And We test you with evil and with good as trial; and to Us you will be returned.﴾ *(Qur'an 21: 34-35)*

There is a destined time for death, which cannot be brought forward or extended. It is written while the person is in the mother's womb. If someone attempted to commit suicide, but it was not his time to die, he would not die. Likewise, if someone tried to prolong her life with all of the sophisticated medical equipment available, she would not be able to extend it for even one second.

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[2] al-Ashqar, 2002a, p. 28.

﴿And it is not [possible] for one to die except by the permission of Allah at a decree determined...﴾ *(Qur'an 3: 145)*

﴿Wherever you may be, death will overtake you, even if you should be within towers of lofty construction...﴾ *(Qur'an 4: 78)*

﴿We have decreed death among you, and We are not to be outdone.﴾ *(Qur'an 56: 60)*

The exact time, location, and manner of death are known only by Allah(ﷻ); this is part of the unseen. The wisdom of this is that the human will be encouraged to constantly be in a state of preparation for death, knowing that it might occur at any moment.

﴿Indeed, Allah [alone] has knowledge of the Hour and sends down the rain and knows what is in the wombs. And no soul perceives what it will earn tomorrow, and no soul perceives in what land it will die. Indeed, Allah is Knowing and Acquainted.﴾ *(Qur'an 31: 34)*

Agonies and stupor of death

The dying process involves an element of pain and agony:

﴿And the intoxication of death will bring the truth; that is what you were trying to avoid.﴾ *(Qur'an 50: 19)*

The Arabic term, translated here as the 'intoxication of death', refers to the agony that the individual will feel at this time. It is analogous to intoxication because the dying person may have similar symptoms such as slurred speech, impairment in attention or memory, delirium, or stupor. The overall experience is one of distress and hardship.

The suffering of the disbelievers and sinners will be more severe than that of the believers. They will actually be in a state of terror when they realize the punishment that is awaiting them.

﴿And who is more unjust than one who invents a lie about Allah or says: It has been inspired to me, while nothing has been inspired to him, and one who says: I will reveal [something] like what Allah

revealed. And if you could but see when the wrongdoers are in the overwhelming pangs of death while the angels extend their hands, [saying]: Discharge your souls! Today you will be awarded the punishment of [extreme] humiliation for what you used to say against Allah other than the truth and [that] you were, towards His verses, being arrogant.﴾ *(Qur'an 6: 93)*

The Prophet (ﷺ) himself even experienced the pains of death, as indicated by the following hadith. 'Â'ishah (رضي الله عنها) related: «(On the occasion of his approaching death), Allah's Messenger had a small vessel of water placed before him. He began to dip his hands in the water. Wiping his face with them, he said: 'There is no god but Allah! Verily, death brings with it agonies!' Then he raised his hand up and kept repeating: 'In the most exalted company,' until his soul was taken and his hand fell limp.» (recorded by Bukhari) The Prophet (ﷺ) made this final statement when Allah gave him a choice between living eternally in this life or being in the company of the righteous in paradise (prophets, martyrs, and the righteous followers of the prophets). His statement: 'In the most exalted company' signified his choice.

Repentance before death

Repentance is accepted from the dying person up until the time that the soul reaches the throat. The Prophet (ﷺ) said: «Allah accepts the repentance of the servant as long as his spirit has not arrived at his throat (in its leaving his body upon death).» (a reliable hadith recorded by Aḥmad and at-Tirmidhi) The Arabic phrase translated here as, 'as long as his spirit has not arrived at his throat' literally means 'as long as he does not gargle.' This refers to the gargling sound that the dying person makes as the soul leaves the body.[3]

[3] al-Kanadi, 1996, p. 20 (footnote).

Once the soul is departing the body, repentance or the declaration of faith will not be accepted from the dying person. Allah (ﷻ) mentions:

﴿But repentance is not [accepted] of those who [continue to] do evil deeds up until, when death comes to one of them, he says: Indeed, I have repented now, or of those who die while they are disbelievers. For them We have prepared a painful punishment.﴾ *(Qur'an 4: 18)*

The joy of the believers and sadness of the disbelievers

The believers will be joyful when the angels come with the glad tidings from Allah (ﷻ), and they will be eager to meet their Lord. The disbelievers and sinners will be in great distress and will hate to meet Allah.

The Prophet (ﷺ) said: «Whoever loves to meet Allah, Allah (too) loves to meet him, and whoever hates to meet Allah, Allah (too) hates to meet him. 'Â'ishah, or some of the wives of the Prophet (رضي الله عنهن), said: But we dislike death. He said: It is not like this; what is meant is that when the time of death approaches for a believer, he receives the good news of Allah's being pleased with him and His blessings upon him, and so at that time nothing is dearer to him than what is in front of him. He therefore loves the meeting with Allah, and Allah (too) loves the meeting with him. But when the time of death approaches for a disbeliever, he receives the evil news of Allah's torment and His requital, whereupon nothing is more hateful to him than what is before him. Therefore, he hates the meeting with Allah, and Allah, too, hates the meeting with him.» (recorded by Bukhari)

CHAPTER TWELVE

Social Psychology

Social psychology is generally defined as the scientific study of how we think about, influence, and relate to one another.[1] This specialty concentrates on such concepts as attributions, conformity and obedience, group influence, prejudice, aggression, and altruism.[2] Attributions are the explanations that we have about other people's behaviour. In general, we know that humans are social beings and that they influence others in various ways.

The role of social support

Research in recent years has delineated the positive influence of social relations and connectedness on both mental and physical health.[3] It has been shown that people function optimally, both

[1] Myers, 2007, p. 723.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Rhodes, G. L., & Lakey, B., 1999, Social support and psychological disorder: Insights from social psychology, in R. M. Kowalski & M. R. Leary (Eds.), *The Social Psychology of Emotional and Behavioral Problems: Interfaces of Social and Clinical Psychology*, Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, pp. 281-309; Uchino, B.N., 2006, Social support=

physically and psychologically, when they are living in socially supportive environments.[4] Individuals with higher levels of social support are less likely to suffer from depression, anxiety and schizophrenia. They are also more likely to have better physical health and to live longer than those with less or no social support.[5]

This fact was actually stated by Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) more than 1400 years ago. He (ﷺ) said: «Whoever desires an increase in his sustenance and age, should keep good relations with kith and kin.» (recorded by Muslim) While social support tends to be broader, the main source for most people comes from close family members and relatives, as stated in this hadith. Keeping good relations entails showing them kindness, compassion and mercy.

Scholars have explained the meaning of this particular hadith in several ways. The first is that the blessings of your life will increase such that you will be able to do more in a shorter period of time, as though you had lived longer. The second possibility is that your lifespan literally increases. This would suggest that if you do not maintain the ties of kinship, you might live a certain number of years; if you do maintain the ties, even more years would be added to your lifespan by the will of Allah (ﷻ).[6]

Social support comprises various domains, including emotional support (intimacy, comfort, and belongingness), instrumental support (tangible assistance), informational assistance, and physical affection.[7] The various types of social support function to buffer the

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=and health: A review of physiological processes potentially underlying links to disease outcomes, *Journal of Behavioral Medicine, 29*(4), pp. 377-378.

[4] Hale, C. J., Hannum, J. W., and Espelage, D. L., 2005, Social support and physical health: The importance of belonging, *Journal of American College Health 53,* p. 276; Rhodes, G. L. & Lakey, B., 1999, pp. 281-309.

[5] Uchino, 2006, pp. 377-378.

[6] Qadhi, 2002, p. 89.

[7] Hale et al., 2005, pp. 276-277.

individual from the ill effects of stressors in life and to provide tangible options for solving life's problems and challenges.

An interesting finding has been that giving social support may be even more beneficial than receiving it. Helping others, or volunteering, provides such benefits as reducing distress and improving physical and mental health.[8] Perceptions related to giving, such as a sense of meaning, purpose, belonging and mattering, may also increase happiness and decrease depression.[9] One interesting study examined the relative contributions of giving support versus receiving support to longevity, in a sample of older married adults. Indicators of giving and receiving support were used to predict mortality status over a five year period in an elderly sample. The results indicated that mortality was significantly reduced for individuals who reported providing instrumental support to friends, relatives, and neighbours, and to those who reported providing emotional support to their spouses. Receiving support had no effect on mortality when giving support was taken into consideration.[10]

What psychologists were figuring out regarding the importance of social ties and social connectedness in the past one hundred years

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[8] Schwartz, C., & Sendor, M., 2000, Helping others helps oneself: Response shift effects in peer support, in K. Schmaling (Ed.), *Adaptation to Changing Health: Response Shift in Quality-of-Life Research*, Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, pp. 43-70; Wilson, J., & Musick, M., 1999, The effects of volunteering on the volunteer, *Law and Contemporary Problems*, *62*, pp. 150-162.

[9] Batson, C. D., 1998, Altruism and prosocial behavior, in D. T. Gilbert, S. T. Fiske, & G. Lindzey (Eds.), *The Handbook of Social Psychology,* New York: McGraw-Hill, Vol. 2, pp. 282-316; Brown, S. L., Nesse, R. M., Vinokur, A. D., & Smith, D. M., 2003, Providing social support may be more beneficial than receiving it: Results from a prospective study of mortality, *Amercian Psychological Society, 14*(4), p. 320; Taylor, J., & Turner, J., 2001, A longitudinal study of the role and significance of mattering to others for depressive symptoms, *Journal of Health and Social Behavior, 42,* p. 310.

[10] Brown et al., 2003, pp. 320-327.

was known by the first Muslim community over 1400 years ago. The comprehensive system of Islam details the thinking, influence, and relations of members of the community, which is centred on fear of and consciousness of Allah (ﷻ). This is the key element that distinguishes a society of believers from one of disbelievers.

Family and parenting

The family is an important institution within the society, since it is the fundamental structure upon which the rest of society is built. Without properly functioning families, societies fall apart, as we see in some countries today. This is why many regulations are present in the Sharia to guarantee the preservation of the family. Families also have beneficial effects upon the mental health of their individual members.

The importance of the marital relationship

Within the family, the marital relationship is the focal point around which other components revolve. If this core is functioning efficiently and harmoniously, then the rest of the system is also likely to be in balance. On the other hand, if there is disruption or discord in the marriage, the complete system will be dysfunctional. A solid marriage leads to a healthy, fully functioning family which, in turn, provides a stable foundation for the society.

The importance of marriage was emphasized by the Prophet (ﷺ), who said: «O young people! Whoever among you is able to marry should marry...» (recorded by Bukhari) He (ﷺ) also said: «Whoever marries has completed half of his faith. So let him have fear of Allah in the remaining half.» (a reliable hadith recorded by aṭ-Ṭayâlisi) Through marriage, spouses assist each other in developing their spiritual potential and perfecting their obedience to Allah (ﷻ).

When we submit to Allah (ﷻ) through our marriage, we obtain the serenity mentioned in the following verse:

﴿And of His signs is that He created for you from yourselves mates, that you may find tranquillity in them; and He placed between you affection and mercy. Indeed in that are signs for a people who give thought.﴾ *(Qur'an 30: 21)*

An Islamic marriage entails affection, respect, selflessness and fulfilment of marital obligations. The Prophet (ﷺ) said: «The most perfect Muslim in the matter of faith is one who has excellent behaviour; and the best among you are those who behave best towards their wives.» (a reliable hadith recorded by at-Tirmidhi) There should also be co-operation, compromise, understanding, and forgiveness in order to avoid conflict and the breakdown of the family unit. Allah (ﷻ) says:

﴿...And live with them in kindness. For if you dislike them — perhaps you dislike a thing, and Allah makes therein much good.﴾ *(Qur'an 4: 19)*

Researchers in social sciences have identified the benefits and advantages of marriage for the society, the family and the couple. Results have consistently shown that married couples have higher levels of emotional and psychological well-being than the unmarried.[11] Following a large, multi-national survey on marital status and happiness, the authors concluded that married couples were more likely to report being happy than cohabiting couples.[12] Being married was 2.4 times more closely tied to variance in

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[11] Kim, H. K., & McKenry, P. C., 2002, The relationship between marriage and psychological well-being: A longitudinal analysis, *Journal of Family Issues, 23,* pp. 885-911; Lees, D., 2007, Research Note: The Psychological Benefits of Marriage, retrieved October 15, 2009 from http://www.maxim.org.nz/files/pdf/psychologicalbenefitsofmarriage.pdf, pp. 1-4.

[12] Stack, S., & Eshleman, J. R., 1998, Marital status and happiness: A 17-nation study, *Journal of Marriage and Family, 60*(2), pp. 527-536.

happiness than cohabitation; these results were equally applicable to men and women.[13] Married men and women also report significantly lower levels of depression than their single, divorced, widowed, or cohabiting counterparts.[14]

Various explanations have been offered to explain why married couples tend to be happier and have better psychological well-being and life satisfaction. Married people generally have better physical health than unmarried people, and those who are healthier tend to be happier.[15] A greater level of commitment within marriage leads to higher levels of security and lowered stress levels, which, in turn, result in better psychological health.[16] Married men have higher incomes than single men and have been found to be more productive and more likely to be promoted.[17] Married women also have substantially more economic resources than single women.[18] Greater financial stability within marriage leads to lower levels of stress and

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[13] Ibid.

[14] Brown, S. L., 2000, The effect of union type on psychological well-being: Depression among cohabitors versus marrieds, *Journal of Health and Social Behavior, 41,* pp. 241-255; Earle, J. R., Smith, M. H., Harris, C. T., & Longino, C. F., 1998, Women, marital status and symptoms of depression in a midlife sample, *Journal of Women and Aging, 10,* p. 10; Lamb, K. E., Lee, G. R., & Demaris, A., 2003, Union formation and depression: Selection and relationship effects, *Journal of Marriage and Family, 65,* pp. 953-962; Simon, R. W., 2002, Revisiting the relationships among gender, marital status, and mental health, *American Journal of Sociology, 107,* pp. 1065-1096.

[15] Lees, 2007, p. 1.

[16] Marcussen, K., 2004, Explaining differences in mental health between married and cohabiting individuals, paper presented at the American Sociological Association Meeting, San Francisco, CA.

[17] Korenman, S., & Neumark, D., 2001, Does marriage really make men more productive?, *The Journal of Human Resources, 26,* pp. 282-307.

[18] Hahn, B.A., 1993, Marital status and women's health: The effect of economic marital acquisition, *Journal of Marriage and Family, 55,* pp. 495-504.

higher levels of well-being and relationship quality.[19]

Marriage has an effect upon physical health, primarily through health behaviours. Both married men and women have lower levels of negative health behaviours, such as smoking, drinking alcohol, using drugs, and so on, than unmarried men and women. There are several possible explanations for this occurrence. Firstly, spouses monitor each other's health and health-related behaviours and encourage self-regulation. This is particularly relevant for men. Secondly, social support from the spouse helps individuals cope more successfully with stressful life events and situations. Thirdly, marriage provides individuals with a sense of meaning in life and a sense of obligation to others. This, in turn, inhibits risk-taking behaviours and encourages healthy ones.[20]

In addition to better overall physical health, married men and women have lower mortality rates than their unmarried counterparts.[21] This makes sense, given the reduction in risky and unhealthy behaviours. As already mentioned, marriages increase material well-being, which can be used to purchase better medical care, a better diet, and safer surroundings; those, in turn, contribute to a longer life. Marriage also provides individuals with a network of social support, which is important for health and longevity.[22]

It is also important to mention the effects of marriage on children. Researchers have found that children who grow up in a married, two-parent family, are less likely to experience emotional-behavioural problems.[23] They are also less likely to drop out of

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[19] Ibid.

[20] Waite, L. J., 1995, Does marriage matter?, *Demography, 32*(4), pp. 486-488.

[21] Hu, Y., & Goldman, N., 1990, Mortality differentials by marital status: An international comparison, *Demography, 27*(2), pp. 233-250; Waite, 1995, pp. 488-489.

[22] Waite, 1995, pp. 488-489.

[23] Brown, S. L., 2004, Family structure and child well-being: The significance=

school, use drugs, give birth as teenagers, or experience child abuse.[24] Children from married, two-parent families tend to be more educated and to have better academic outcomes than do children from other family structures.[25]

Poverty is estimated to account for about half of the poor outcomes in single-parent (usually single mother) homes. The other half comes from children's lack of access to the time and attention of two adults as in two-parent families. The presence of two parents leads to higher levels of parental supervision, greater social support, and more parental time assisting with homework. Children in one-parent families spend less time with both their father and mother, and they generally report lower-quality relationships with their parents.[26]

Motherhood in Islam

In Islam, motherhood is held in the highest esteem, reflecting its significant nature. In a well-known hadith, it is reported that: «Once a man went to the Prophet (ﷺ) and asked: O Messenger of Allah, who, of all people, is most entitled to my kindness and good company? The Prophet answered: Your mother. Then the man asked: Who comes next? The Prophet replied: Your mother. The man again

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=of parental cohabitation, *Journal of Marriage and Family, 66,* pp. 351-367; Hou, F., and Ram, B., 2003, Changes in family structure and child outcomes: Roles of economic and familial resources*, Policy Studies Journal, 31,* pp. 309-330.

[24] Flewelling, R. L, and Bauman, K. E., 1990, Family structure as a predictor of initial substance use and sexual intercourse in early adolescence, *Journal of Marriage and the Family, 52,* pp. 171-181; Waite, 1995, pp. 493-495.

[25] Haurin, R. J., 1992, Patterns of childhood residence and the relationship to young adult outcomes, *Journal of Marriage and the Family, 54,* pp. 846-860; Hou et al., 2003, pp. 309-330; Jeynes, W. H., 2000, The effects of several of the most common family structures on the academic achievement of eighth graders*, Marriage and Family Review, 30*(1/2), pp. 73-97.

[26] Waite, 1995, pp. 493-495.

asked: Who comes next? Again the Prophet answered: Your mother. The man asked one more time: Who comes next? The Prophet replied: Your father.» (recorded by Bukhari and Muslim)

Mothers are precious and valued, as they are responsible for raising and inspiring the next generation. Most of a mother's time is spent on her duties as a mother: nurturing, teaching and guiding. For these reasons, they should be granted the respect and honour that they deserve.

In His wisdom, Allah (ﷻ) created the role of motherhood specifically for women. He also gave them the unique characteristics and traits needed to effectively fill this role, including compassion, sensitivity, patience and mercy. Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) said: «Verily, on the same day when Allah created the heavens and the earth, He created one hundred parts of mercy. Every part of mercy is analogous to the space between the heavens and the earth, and He, out of this mercy, endowed one part to the earth. It is because of this that the mother shows affection to her child.» (recorded by Muslim)

Motherhood is a full-time career that involves pregnancy, giving birth, breastfeeding and childrearing for many years. These are enough assignments for one individual, without adding the additional burden of having to provide for the family financially. It is part of Allah's mercy that women are not required to work outside of the home to bring provisions for their children. The burden in most cases would be more than she could bear. The ideal situation allows her to fulfil her primary responsibility to the best of her potential.

Gender roles

Men and women were created by Allah (ﷻ) with the same spiritual nature, and both will be accountable on the Day of Judgment for their choices in this world. They have the same religious duties and obligations, with some minor variations: women are exempted

from prayer and fasting during menstruation. They will also be rewarded for their belief and good deeds in the hereafter. From the perspective of Islam, there is no superiority of one gender over the other: superiority is only measured in terms of piety and righteousness.

Allah (ﷻ) says:

﴿...Never will I allow to be lost the work of [any] worker among you, whether male or female; you are of one another...﴾ *(Qur'an 3: 195)*

﴿Whoever does righteousness, whether male or female, while he [or she] is a believer — We will surely cause him [or her] to live a good life, and We will surely give them their reward [in the hereafter] according to the best of what they used to do.﴾ *(Qur'an 16: 97)*

﴿And whoever does righteous deeds, whether male or female, while being a believer — those will enter paradise and will not be wronged, [even as much as] the speck on a date seed.﴾ *(Qur'an 4: 124)*

Within this general framework, Allah (ﷻ) has assigned males and females specific roles in the society. These roles are complementary and serve to enhance the healthy functioning of the family and society. Allah (ﷻ) has provided both genders with the special qualities and characteristics needed to fulfil their respective roles. He (ﷻ) mentions:

﴿Men are in charge of women by [right of] what Allah has given one over the other and what they spend [for maintenance] from their wealth. So righteous women are devoutly obedient, guarding in [the husband's] absence what Allah would have them guard...﴾ *(Qur'an 4: 34)*

Men were ordained to be the protectors and maintainers of the family and the head of the household. Women are responsible for nurturing and raising righteous children, and for taking care of the home. Women are also expected to be obedient to their husbands (as long as what he asks does not violate Allah's laws). Allah (ﷻ) has created systems with balance and order, and this role differentiation

is necessary for effective functioning of the family unit. The family system functions most effectively when the laws of Allah (ﷻ) are followed.

Attempts to redefine the family unit

Attempts are consistently being made to redefine the concept of 'family' and the roles within the family unit. In some societies, for example, there have been efforts to replace traditional family roles with the idea of 'equality' or sameness. In this ideology, women are held to be 'equal' with men in all aspects of life and are encouraged to compete with men on their level. The role of motherhood is denigrated; it is seen as less valuable than a career in which money, power, and other worldly goals may be pursued. Childbearing and childrearing are viewed as something of a nuisance because they get in the way of women's efforts for equality.

The 'Empowerment of Women' is an obvious example of this phenomenon, which is being endorsed by various international organizations. Goals for 'the complete empowerment of women' are included in both the *United Nations Human Development Report* and the *Arab Human Development Report.* The *Human Development Report* even has a gender empowerment measure (GEM) that assesses gender inequality in economic and political opportunities.

The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, from the Office of the High Commissioner of Human Rights of the United Nations, is the most deliberate attempt to alter the status of the genders. One of the main objectives of this committee is the following:

> Aware that a change in the traditional role of men as well as the role of women in society and in the family is needed to achieve full equality between men and women..., States Parties shall take all appropriate measures: to modify the social and cultural patterns of conduct of men and women, with a view of achieving

> the elimination of prejudices and customary and all other practices which are based on the idea of the inferiority or the superiority of either of the sexes or on stereotyped roles for men and women.[27]

As is evident in the statement, this committee openly takes aim at religion and culture, expressing the view that "cultural and religious values cannot be allowed to undermine the universality of women's rights."[28] According to this committee, "In all countries, [one of] the most significant factors inhibiting women's ability to participate in public life have been the cultural framework of values and religious beliefs."[29]

These efforts represent malevolent attacks on the values of religion, religious life and the family. The principal goal of these organizations is to eliminate the traditional roles of men and women and replace them with the concept of 'equality' or sameness. This is a feminist goal that has been in existence for the last fifty years or more. The view of feminists is that women should be freed from the 'bondage' of motherhood and allowed to participate equally with men in all aspects of life outside the home (economic, political, and social). Inherent in all of this is a hostile attitude to long-standing notions of marriage, the natural family and the rearing of children.

There are some positive aspects of 'empowerment of women', such as reducing discrimination, increasing education and literacy, and improving quality of life, but with those efforts come the dangers as well. For, while there are some honourable goals on the surface, the ultimate consequence is a weakening of the family structure, the foundation upon which society is built.

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[27] United Nations, Division for the Advancement of Women, Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), retrieved October 14, 2009 from http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/text/econvention.htm.

[28] Ibid.

[29] Ibid.

A critical look will reveal that 'Empowerment of Women' ultimately means that women:

1. Work two jobs instead of one, having primary responsibility for the home and children, even though they also work outside the home.
2. Often work in male-dominated environments, having daily contact with men with whom it is not permissible for them to have close relations (men whom they would be eligible to marry).
3. Are forced to put their small children into daycare, even infants as young as six weeks old.
4. Spend, on an average, only thirty minutes a week in meaningful conversation with their children.
5. Suffer from depression at two or three times the rate of men, along with other types of psychological distress, such as anxiety, stress reactions, and the like.
6. Experience conflict between their feminine traits: nurturance, deference, affiliation, and so on, and the characteristics necessary for career success: assertiveness, autonomy, independence, and so on.

The whole society suffers as well due to the devaluing of the role of motherhood. Children are not provided with the love, care and attention that they need, so they become more vulnerable to the trials and tribulations of this life: childhood/adolescent depression or anxiety, suicide, drug or alcohol abuse, juvenile delinquency and the like. Motherhood is a critical role that cannot be relegated to a low status in society. Mothers are the ones who provide stability to the family and the community. Mothers make many sacrifices for the sake of their children and strive to raise righteous children who will benefit society.

Characteristics of the Muslim community

The social concept of the *Ummah* in the Islamic tradition refers to a community of Muslim believers. It is a worldwide community built upon and united by faith; it transcends nationality, ethnicity, race and other differences. It is one family, one people, throughout the ages and generations, from all places and nations, of every class, colour, and culture. It is a community with shared values, beliefs, and objectives; a sense of group unity; skills and models for constructive interaction; and true altruism and empathy for one another.

Al-Hashimi describes the ideal Muslim community as having the following characteristics:

1. Complete submission to Allah (ﷻ) alone
2. Perfect Sharia
3. Referring all rulings to Allah
4. Love and brotherhood
5. Virtues and morals
6. Refined character and humanity
7. Enjoining what is good and forbidding what is evil
8. Consultation
9. Solidarity and prosperity
10. Justice and equality
11. Knowledge and action
12. Tolerance
13. Freedom

14. Strength and jihad
15. Progress and advancement[30]

Love and brotherhood

The Prophet (ﷺ) said: «Whoever possesses the following three qualities will taste the sweetness of eemân: One to whom Allah and His Messenger become dearer than anything else, whoever loves his brother (or sister) solely for Allah's sake, and whoever hates to revert to disbelief just as he hates to be thrown into the Fire.» (recorded by Bukhari and Muslim) When Muslims love their brothers and sisters, they do so for the sake of Allah, so love for other Muslims is connected to love for Allah (ﷻ). They love each other and treat each other in the manner that Allah (ﷻ) has ordained. They love each other because they share a special bond that can never be broken: the bond of faith in Allah (ﷻ), the Creator of all humankind. It is a bond between hearts and minds that brings them close in a unique and special way; so much so that they are willing to sacrifice anything for each other, knowing they will gain the pleasure of Allah in the process. Nothing is ever done for worldly gain or purpose. While scientific research has documented the benefits of social support, it is likely that the benefits of this exceptional relationship are indescribable.

The Prophet (ﷺ) said: «A man went to visit a brother of his in another village. Allah sent an angel to wait for him on the road. When the man came along, the angel asked him: Where are you headed? He said: I am going to visit a brother of mine who lives in this village. The angel asked: Have you done him any favour (for which you are now seeking repayment)? He said: No, I just love him for the sake of Allah. The angel told him: I am a messenger to you from Allah, sent

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[30] al-Hashimi, M. A., 2007, *The Ideal Muslim Society: as Defined in the Quran and Sunnah,* Riyadh: International Islamic Publishing House, pp. 25-26.

to tell you that He loves you as you love your brother for His sake.» (recorded by Muslim)

The Prophet (ﷺ) said: «None of you has belief until he desires for his Muslim brother that which he desires for himself.» (recorded by Bukhari and Muslim) He (ﷺ) also said: «The believers in their mutual love, kindness and compassion are like the human body; when one of its parts is in agony, the entire body feels the pain, both in sleeplessness and fever.» (recorded by Bukhari and Muslim)

These hadiths, as well as others, highlight the selflessness of brotherhood and sisterhood in Islam. True Muslims will love their brothers and sisters in Islam with sincere and honest love, for the sake of Allah. They will strive hard to maintain these ties of love and brother/sisterhood. They will want for others what they want for themselves and will not forsake them or cut off relations. Tolerance and forgiveness for mistakes are important parts of their character, and they will be certain to conceal the faults of their brothers and sisters. There will be no hatred, envy or malice, and they will not hurt the feelings of others by being hostile or argumentative. The sincere brothers and sisters will not backbite or gossip and will stop others who engage in this harmful behaviour. They will be kind and generous to their brothers and sisters and will offer them sincere and constructive advice when necessary. They will make every effort to enjoin the right for them and forbid them from wrong. They will be loyal towards their brothers and sisters and defend them in their absence.

The Prophet (ﷺ) reminded us of what is in store for the one who is a sincere brother or sister: «One who helps a fellow Muslim in removing his difficulty in this world, Allah will remove the former's distress on the Day of Judgment. He who helps to remove the hardship of another will have his difficulties removed by Allah in this world and the hereafter. One who conceals the shortcomings of another Muslim will have his faults covered up in this world and the next by Allah. Allah continues to help a servant as long as he goes on

helping his own brother (or sister in Islam).» (recorded by Muslim)

The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said: «On the Day of Judgment, Allah, the Most High, will announce: Where are those persons who love each other for the sake of My pleasure? This day I am going to shelter them in the shade provided by Me. Today there is no shade except My shade.» (recorded by Muslim) Those who love each other for Allah's sake will find His shade on the day when there will be no other shade. The rewards that Allah (ﷻ) gives for this love are beyond our imagination and beyond what we are capable of earning. They are far beyond the effort and sacrifice that we make. This reality emphasizes the importance of loving each other for the sake of Allah.

Brotherhood in Islam is built upon love, faith and loyalty to the religion. Brothers and sisters in Islam share beliefs, values, and practices; this leads to the creation of a bond between their hearts and minds, a bond that is impossible to establish for any other reason and one that cannot be easily broken. The relationship is built upon co-operation, compassion and mutual support.

﴿And hold firmly to the rope of Allah all together, and do not become divided. And remember the favour of Allah upon you — when you were enemies and He brought your hearts together and you became, by His favour, brothers...﴾ *(Qur'an 3: 103)*

Alliance and dissociation

Alliance and dissociation is an important concept related to community in Islam, and it is intricately tied to tawḥeed (belief in the Oneness of Allah). Alliance encompasses affection, assistance and mutual support; it means to help, love, honour and respect and be devoted to. It is a fundamental aspect of faith that a believer loves the prophets and those who follow them for the sake of Allah. They should be friends, protectors, helpers and supporters of one another. Allah (ﷻ) says:

﴿Your ally is none but Allah and [therefore] His Messenger and those

who have believed — those who establish prayer and give zakât, and they bow [in worship]. And whoever is an ally of Allah and His Messenger and those who have believed — indeed, the party of Allah — they will be the predominant.﴾ *(Qur'an 5: 55-56)*

The Prophet (ﷺ) said: «The strongest bond of faith is loyalty for the sake of Allah and opposition for His sake, love for the sake of Allah and enmity for His sake.» (a sound hadith recorded by aṭ-Ṭabarâni)

The opposite of this allegiance is dissociation, which is enmity or severance based upon animosity and distance. As believers, we should distance ourselves from those who actively oppose Allah (ﷻ) and His Messenger. This would include any of the disbelievers, such as the Jews or Christians, atheists or polytheists. There are many verses referring to this fact, and this issue has been discussed in some detail in Chapter Six, in the section on hatred. As was mentioned there, the reference is to those disbelievers, whether Jews or Christians, atheists or polytheists, who actively work to harm the Muslims or Islam. Other disbelievers who have not received the message of Islam, or who have received the message and have not accepted it, but who do not harm the Muslims or Islam, nor do they help others to harm them, would not fall into this category.

Allah (ﷻ) mentions in the Qur'an:

﴿You will not find a people who believe in Allah and the Last Day having affection for those who oppose Allah and His Messenger, even if they were their fathers or their sons or their brothers or their kindred. Those — He has decreed within their hearts faith and supported them with spirit from Him. And We will admit them to gardens beneath which rivers flow, wherein they abide eternally. Allah is pleased with them, and they are pleased with Him — those are the party of Allah. Unquestionably, the party of Allah — they are the successful.﴾ *(Qur'an 58: 22)*

Allah (ﷻ) says:

﴿O you who have believed, do not take your fathers or your brothers as allies if they have preferred disbelief over belief. And whoever does so among you — then it is those who are the wrongdoers. Say [O Muhammad]: If your fathers, your sons, your brothers, your wives, your relatives, wealth which you have obtained, commerce wherein you fear decline, and dwellings with which you are pleased, are more beloved to you than Allah and His Messenger and jihad [striving] in His cause, then wait until Allah executes His command. And Allah does not guide the defiantly disobedient people.﴾

(Qur'an 9: 23-24)

﴿O you who have believed, take not those who have taken your religion in ridicule and amusement among the ones who were given the Scripture before you nor the disbelievers as allies. And fear Allah, if you should [truly] be believers.﴾ *(Qur'an 5: 57)*

﴿O you who have believed, do not take the Jews and the Christians as allies. They are [in fact] allies of one another. And whoever is an ally to them among you — then indeed, he is [one] of them. Indeed, Allah guides not the wrongdoing people. So you see those in whose hearts is disease [hypocrisy] hastening into [association with] them, saying: We are afraid a misfortune may strike us. But perhaps Allah will bring conquest or a decision from Him, and they will become, over what they have been concealing within themselves, regretful.﴾

(Qur'an 5: 51-52)

These verses make clear the position that a believer should have towards others, depending upon their faith and belief. Ibn Taymiyah stated:

> The obligation of the believer is to choose both his friends and his enemies for the sake of Allah. Whenever there are believers, he must ally himself with them, even if they have wronged him, since no personal offence can absolve one of the obligations of alliance in faith.[31]

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[31] al-Qahtani, 1999, p. 79.

Three categories of people

There are basically three categories of people: true believers, believers who mix good deeds with bad, and disbelievers. Each should be dealt with according to their level of faith.

The believers are those who deserve complete loyalty due to their belief in Allah (ﷻ) and His Messenger, and their fulfilling of all obligations in terms of knowledge, belief, and actions. They observe what has been enjoined upon them and leave that which has been forbidden by Allah (ﷻ) and His Messenger (ﷺ). Their love and loyalty, anger and enmity, are for the sake of Allah. The believers should be given complete alliance, support, and protection.

As for the Muslims who embody both good and evil and mix obedience with disobedience (thus inspiring both love and hatred), they have the right to loyalty and devotion matching their level of goodness and also a degree of enmity according to the extent of their wrongdoing.[32] A hadith in Bukhari gives the example of a Companion who used to drink alcohol; another man cursed him, but the Prophet (ﷺ) told him to not curse him because he loved Allah (ﷻ) and His Messenger.

The disbelievers, due to their wilful disbelief in Allah and His angels, books, messengers, the Day of Resurrection and the hereafter, do not merit the compassion that believers and Muslims do. They commit shirk by worshipping other than Allah: prophets, righteous people, idols and the like; they direct their love or supplication, fear or hope, glorification or dependence towards something or someone other than Allah.

Ibn al-Qayyim wrote:

> Whoever denies the Messenger of Allah, withholds his obedience, disputes his authority, rejects his religion and follows

[32] Ibid., p. 84.

> a path other than his, fails to enter into his compact, cedes to the ignorance in his soul, to whim and fancy of his heart, to the disavowal and disbelief in his breast, to the rebellion and revolt of his body; he is the Ally of Satan.[33]

Alliance and dissociation, at a minimum, must be in the heart. Ibn Taymiyah stated:

> As for love and hatred in the heart, desire for or dislike of something, it must be absolute. It is not possible for this to be lacking, except if part of faith is also lacking. As for one's actions in this world, this is according to ability and circumstance. When the likes and dislikes of the heart are totally sound then one's actions will follow this, in so far as one is able to act; but the fullness of the reward is due to the sincerity of the heart.[34]

Enjoining what is good and forbidding what is evil

The enjoining of good and forbidding of evil is one of the distinctive characteristics of the Muslim community. In the Qur'an, when Allah (ﷻ) mentions the attributes of the sincere believers and describes their mission in life, He often refers to the enjoining of good and the forbidding of evil.[35]

﴿And let there be [arising] from you a nation inviting to [all that is] good, enjoining what is right and forbidding what is wrong, and those will be the successful.﴾ *(Qur'an 3: 104)*

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[33] Ibn al-Qayyim, *Hidayat al-Hayara,* p. 7; as quoted in al-Qahtani, 1999, p. 59.

[34] Ibn Taymiyyah, *Majmu' al-Fatawa,* pp. 108-201: as quoted in al-Qahtani, 1999, p. 86.

[35] al-Hashimi, 2007, p. 99.

﴿The believing men and women are allies of one another. They enjoin what is right and forbid what is wrong and establish prayer and give zakât and obey Allah and His Messenger. Those — Allah will have mercy upon them. Indeed, Allah is exalted in might and Wise.﴾ *(Qur'an 9: 71)*

﴿[Such believers are] the repentant, the worshippers, the praisers [of Allah], the travellers [for His cause], those who bow and prostrate [in prayer], those who enjoin what is right and forbid what is wrong, and those who observe the limits [set by] Allah. And give good tidings to the believers.﴾ *(Qur'an 9: 112)*

The high status of enjoining the good and forbidding the evil is emphasized by its association in these verses with prayer, alms-giving, repentance, and obedience to Allah (ﷻ) and His Messenger.

﴿You are the best nation produced [as an example] for humankind. You enjoin what is right and forbid what is wrong and believe in Allah...﴾ *(Qur'an 3: 110)*

In this verse, the Muslim Ummah is described as the best nation due to the virtue of enjoining good and forbidding evil. This implies that other nations do not possess this quality.

﴿...Help you one another in virtue, righteousness, and piety; but do not help one another in sin and transgression...﴾ *(Qur'an 5: 2)*

Enjoining the good and forbidding evil is an obligation upon every member of the community — men and women, rulers and subjects, each according to his or her circumstances and ability. Abu Sa'eed al-Khudri (رضي الله عنه) said that he heard the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) say: «Whoever of you sees an evil action, let him change it with his hand; and if he is not able to do so, then (he must change it) with his tongue; and if he is not able to do so, then (he must change it) with his heart — and that is the weakest of faith.» (recorded by Muslim)

Some people have special responsibilities to forbid evil because they may have more ability or power to remove it. These would include the rulers and scholars, as well as other people in positions of

authority. As a communal obligation, if a Muslim or a group of Muslims repels the evil, the rest of the community is absolved of that responsibility. If, however, none of them repels the evil, although they have the ability to do so, then they are all counted as sinful. Enjoining good and forbidding evil can become an individual obligation if a person is the only one who knows about a particular evil or who is able to remove it. It then becomes obligatory upon him or her to remove that evil, and neglecting to do so would be sinful.

The effects of enjoining what is good and forbidding what is evil are illustrated in the following hadith of the Prophet (ﷺ), who said: «The person abiding by Allah's order and restrictions, in comparison to those who violate them, is like the example of those persons who drew lots for their seats in a boat. Some of them got seats in the upper part, and the others in the lower. When the latter needed water, they had to go up to bring water (and that troubled the others), so they said: Let us make a hole in our share of the ship (and get water), saving those who are above us from our troubling them. So if the people in the upper part left the others do what they had suggested, all the people of the ship would be destroyed, but if they prevented them, both parties would be safe.» (recorded by Bukhari)

Enjoining what is good and forbidding what is evil saves the disobedient, careless people as well as those who are obedient and righteous. It leads to a society that is secure, moral, and prosperous — one in which the individual is able to reach his or her potential in the spiritual, psychological and social realms of life. Avoiding this responsibility leads to the opposite, which is deterioration and destruction, not only for those who make the mistakes but for all people — righteous and immoral, obedient and disobedient, pious and evil.[36] Life becomes challenging and unpleasant, corruption and immorality flourish unrestrained, and human potential and dignity

[36] Ibid., p. 102.

are suppressed.[37] Allah (ﷻ) mentions this in the Qur'an:

﴿And fear a trial [affliction or punishment] which will not strike those who have wronged among you exclusively, and know that Allah is severe in penalty.﴾ *(Qur'an 8: 25)*

Dr. al-Hashimi describes this appropriately in the following manner:

> Evil may become widespread in a society and may be committed openly, and people may become used to it and keep quiet about it, and they may become so desensitized to it that they no longer feel that it is harmful to their religious commitment, morals and good traditions. So they become confused and are no longer able to distinguish between good and evil, right and wrong, *ḥalâl* and *ḥarâm*. At this point the society's standards become turned upside-down, and people see sincerity, honesty and religious commitment as negligence, backwardness and strictness, and they see lying, betrayal and permissiveness as smartness, progress and flexibility. So things are turned on their heads and what is good becomes evil and what is evil becomes good![38]

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[37] Ibid., p. 105.

[38] Ibid., p. 107.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

Satan, Jinn and Humans

The jinn are a third type of being, distinct from humans and angels, who were created by Allah (ﷻ). They were created from fire, and they live in a world of their own. They have some characteristics similar to humans, including the ability to think and reason. They are also able to choose between the paths of good or evil;[1] therefore, some of the jinn are Muslims who submit to Allah (ﷻ), while others are disbelievers. The Qur'an mentions:

﴿And among us are Muslims [in submission to Allah], and among us are the unjust [those who deviate from the truth]. And whoever has become Muslim — those have sought out the right course. But as for the unjust, they will be, for hell, firewood.﴾ *(Qur'an 72: 14-15)*

Satan himself is from the world of the jinn. He is called *Shayṭân* in the Arabic language, which means 'arrogant rebel'. Another term that is used is *Iblees*, meaning the one 'who has no good in him' or 'who is lost and in despair'.[2] Satan was thrown out of paradise due to his arrogance and pride, but he asked to be kept alive until the Day of Judgment.

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[1] al-Ashqar, U. S. (1998), *The World of the Jinn and Devils* (J. Zarabozo, Trans.), Boulder, CO: Al-Basheer Company for Publications and Translations, pp. 5, 9.

[2] Ibid., pp. 13-14.

﴿[Allah] said: Descend from it [paradise], for it is not for you to be arrogant therein. So get out; indeed, you are of the debased. [Satan] said: Reprieve me until the day they are resurrected. [Allah] said: Indeed, you are of those reprieved.﴾ *(Qur'an 7: 13-15)*

Satan then promised that he would try to mislead the offspring of Adam (عليه السلام) by plotting against them, with the goal of leading them to the hellfire.

﴿[Satan] said: Because You have put me in error, I will surely sit in wait for them [humankind] on Your straight path. Then I will come to them from before them and from behind them and on their right and on their left, and You will not find most of them grateful [to You].﴾ *(Qur'an 7: 16-17)*

Allah (سبحانه وتعالى) warns the humans about Satan, since he is a major test for them:

﴿O children of Adam, let not Satan tempt you as he removed your parents from paradise, stripping them of their clothing to show them their private parts. Indeed, he sees you, him and his tribe, from where you do not see him. Indeed, We have made the devils allies to those who do not believe.﴾ *(Qur'an 7: 27)*

﴿Indeed, Satan is an enemy to you; so take him as an enemy. He only invites his party to be among the companions of the blaze.﴾ *(Qur'an 35: 6)*

﴿...And whoever takes Satan as an ally instead of Allah has certainly sustained a clear loss. He [Satan] promises them and arouses desire in them. But Satan does not promise them except delusion.﴾ *(Qur'an 4: 119-120)*

Every human being has a demon-jinni that never leaves him or her. 'Â'ishah (رضي الله عنها) narrated: «The Messenger of Allah (صلى الله عليه وسلم) went out at night, and I felt jealous. When he came back, he saw what I was feeling and said: O 'Â'ishah, do you feel jealous? I said: How could one like me not feel jealous about one like you? He said: Your demon has come? I said: O Messenger of Allah, do I have a demon? He said:

Yes. I said: And with every person? He replied: Yes. I said: And with you, O Messenger of Allah? He said: Yes, but Allah helped me against him until he became a Muslim.» (recorded by Muslim)

The Prophet (ﷺ) also said: «There is none among you except that he has a partner entrusted to him from among the jinn. The Companions asked: You too, O Messenger of Allah? He responded: Yes, but Allah aids me against him so I am safe from him, and he only orders me to do good.» (recorded by Muslim)

From the Qur'an and Hadith, we know that the world of the jinn comes into contact with humans, and they may influence us in various ways, as we will discuss below. The presence of the jinn is a major test because they have various methods to lead humans to commit shirk, which is the greatest of sins. One who takes Satan and his helpers as allies will eventually end up worshipping Satan in one form or another (especially through desires). Knowing this reality can assist us in taking the necessary steps to protect our faith and beliefs.

Goals of Satan

The main goal of Satan is to send as many humans and jinn as possible to the hellfire, and to prevent them from entering paradise. Allah (ﷻ) says:

﴿...He only invites his party to be among the companions of the blaze.﴾ *(Qur'an 35: 6)*

As mentioned above, this is the reason that Allah (ﷻ), out of His mercy, warns us about Satan and his helpers. If we did not have this knowledge, we would certainly be defeated and be of the losers.

There are sub-goals that Satan focuses on in an effort to reach his main goal. The primary one is to lead people to disbelief and worship of beings or idols other than Allah (ﷻ).

﴿[The hypocrites are] like the example of Satan when he says to man: Disbelieve. But when he disbelieves, he says: Indeed, I am dissociated from you. Indeed, I fear Allah, Lord of the worlds.﴾
(Qur'an 59: 16)

Disbelief may take a variety of forms such as atheism, any religion other than Islam, claiming to be Muslim but committing shirk, praying to saints, circumambulation of graves, and so forth.

The Prophet (ﷺ) said: «O people, Allah has commanded me to teach you that which you do not know, which He has taught me today. (It is that) any bounty which I have conferred upon them is lawful for them. I have created my servants with a natural inclination towards My worship, but the devil turns them away from the right religion. He makes the things that are unlawful to be lawful and he orders them to make partners with Me although they have no authority to do so.» (recorded by Muslim)

If Satan is unsuccessful in leading the humans into disbelief, he will attempt to guide them into sins, block them from doing good deeds, and stir enmity and hatred amongst their brothers and sisters in Islam, as demonstrated in the following verses and hadith:

﴿He only orders you to evil and immorality and to say about Allah what you do not know.﴾ *(Qur'an 2: 169)*

﴿Satan only wants to cause between you animosity and hatred through intoxicants and gambling and to avert you from the remembrance of Allah and from prayer. So will you not desist?﴾
(Qur'an 5:91)

The Prophet (ﷺ) said: «Satan sits on all the paths of the children of Adam. He sits in the path to Islam and says: Will you embrace Islam and leave the religion of your father and grandfathers? The man disobeys him and embraces Islam. Then he sits in the path to migration and says: Will you emigrate and leave your native land? The emigrant is like one on an arduous journey. The man disobeys him and emigrates. Then Satan sits in the path to jihad and says: The

struggle is with your life and wealth. If you fight, you will be killed, your wives will marry others, and your wealth will be distributed. He disobeys him and engages in jihad. Whoever does that has the right from Allah to enter paradise...» (a sound hadith recorded by Aḥmad, an-Nasâ'i and Ibn Ḥibbân)

If Satan is unable to block the people from doing acts of obedience, then he will try to destroy any acts of obedience or worship, and this will result in the reduction or removal of rewards. Since Muslims are closest to Allah (ﷻ) while they are in prayer, Satan comes to them at this time, whispering to them and trying to distract them with the affairs of their lives and various other thoughts.

A Companion came to the Prophet (ﷺ) and said: «Satan comes between me and my prayer and my recitation of the Qur'an and confuses me. The Prophet (ﷺ) said: That is a devil called Khanzab. If you feel that occurring to you, seek refuge in Allah from him and spit (or blow) on your left side three times. The Companion said he did so, and Allah took that devil away from him.» (recorded by Muslim)

The Prophet (ﷺ) also said: «Definitely when Satan hears the call to prayer, he turns his back and flees, noisily breaking wind in order not to hear the call. After the call is over, he returns to whisper to those who are about to pray. When the second call is made, he again flees and noisily breaks wind in order not to hear the call. Again, when the call is over, he returns to (the people praying) and whispers to them (to distract them from the prayer).» (recorded by Muslim)

Satan may also attempt to physically or psychologically harm the Muslims. Satan actually touches the human at birth, as indicated by several hadiths. The Prophet (ﷺ) said: «Every child of Adam is touched by Satan on the day that his mother gives birth to him, except Mary and her son.» (recorded by Muslim) Throughout their lifetime, Satan will attempt to harm human beings in various ways. He may come to them in dreams, which can be disturbing and cause psychological distress.

The Prophet (ﷺ) said: «...There are three types of dreams:

1. Glad tidings from Allah,
2. what is suggested by Satan to frighten the dreamer,
3. the reflection of the thoughts and experiences one has during wakefulness. If someone has a dream which he dislikes, he should not tell it to others but should get up and perform prayer.» (recorded by Bukhari and Muslim)

The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) also said: «A good dream is from Allah, and a bad dream is from Satan. So if one of you sees (in a dream) something which he dislikes, when he gets up, he should spit thrice (on his left side), and seek refuge from Allah from its evil, then it will not harm him.» (recorded by Bukhari and Muslim)

Jâbir ibn ‘Abdullâh narrated that: «A Bedouin came to the Prophet (ﷺ) and said: O Messenger of Allah, I saw in a dream that it was as if my head was cut off and rolled away, and I went after it to catch it. The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said to him: Do not tell people that Satan makes fun of you in your dream.» (recorded by Muslim)

Satan may also sleep in the home and eat of the food over which Allah’s name has not been mentioned. The Prophet (ﷺ) said: «If a man enters his house and remembers Allah while entering and while eating, Satan says: There is no place to pass the night and no dinner. But if he enters without remembering Allah while entering, Satan says: You have found a place to pass the night. And if he does not mention Allah’s name before eating, he says: You have found both a place for the night and dinner.» (recorded by Muslim)

At the time of death, Satan may attempt to cause the believer to go astray. Abu Yusr (رضي الله عنه) reported that: «The Prophet (ﷺ) used to seek refuge from that time. He said: ‘O Allah...I seek refuge in you from Satan causing me to fumble at the time of death...’» (a sound hadith recorded by an-Nasâ’i)

Whispering of Satan

One of the main ways that Satan influences humans is by whispering into their hearts and affecting their thoughts and feelings. It was the whispering of Satan that led Adam (عليه السلام) to disobey Allah's command:

﴿Then Satan whispered to him; he said: O Adam, shall I direct you to the tree of eternity and possession that will not deteriorate?﴾

(Qur'an 20: 120)

It is important to note that whispering may also come from the nafs itself, which may be inclined to evil, or from devils among humankind.

Satan attempts to confuse the human with doubts, suspicion, and scepticism. Allah (سبحانه وتعالى) mentions this phenomenon in the Qur'an:

﴿And We did not send before you any messenger or prophet except that when he spoke [or recited], Satan threw into it [some misunderstanding]. But Allah abolishes that which Satan throws in; then Allah makes precise His verses. And Allah is knowing and Wise. [That is] so He may make what Satan throws in [asserts] a trial for those within whose hearts is disease and those hard of heart. And indeed, the wrongdoers are in extreme dissension. And so those who were given knowledge may know that it is the truth from your Lord and [therefore] believe in it, and their hearts humbly submit to it. And indeed is Allah the guide of those who have believed to a straight path.﴾ *(Qur'an 22: 52-54)*

The Prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم) warned the believers about such doubts when he (صلى الله عليه وسلم) said: «Satan will come to one of you and say: Who created this and that? until he asks: Who created your Lord? When he comes to that, one should seek refuge in Allah and stop (such idle thoughts).» (recorded by Bukhari and Muslim)

Some of the Prophet's Companions (may Allah be pleased with them) even complained about such thoughts. «Some of them came to

the Prophet (ﷺ) and said: We find in our mind great things that we cannot dare talk about! He asked them: Does it really occur to you? They said: Yes. The Prophet (ﷺ) said: This is the clear faith.» (recorded by Muslim) His last statement indicated that their rejection and repulsion of such thoughts was a clear sign of true faith.

In another hadith, a man came to the Prophet (ﷺ) and said: «My soul says something to me concerning which I would rather be turned to ashes than convey it to others. The Prophet (ﷺ) said: All praise is due to Allah who rejects the orders of the whisperer.» (a sound hadith recorded by Abu Dâwood)

As mentioned above, when the believers try to be steadfast and constant in their prayer and remembrance of Allah (ﷻ), Satan comes and attempts to interrupt them through whisperings. The Prophet (ﷺ) recommended that we seek refuge with Allah from Satan and spit (without emitting spittle) to our left, three times.

People will not be held accountable for the whispering that comes from Satan or from their own nafs as long as they do not act upon it or speak about it. They should resist the thoughts and apply the prescriptions from the Qur'an and Sunnah for this type of difficulty. If they do not attempt to resist the thoughts and they follow those inclinations, they will be punished accordingly.

Magic

The verb form of *siḥr* (magic) is *saḥara,* which means to bewitch, charm, enchant, or infatuate.[3] It usually involves some type of incantation, either spoken or written, or some action that will affect the body, heart, or mind of the bewitched without coming in contact with him or her.[4] This is generally considered to be caused by hidden

[3] Wehr, 1974, p. 400.

[4] Philips, A.A.B., 1997, *The Exorcist Tradition in Islaam*, Sharjah, United=

or subtle forces and includes sorcery, witchcraft, and divination.[5] Siḥr has the same root as the noun *saḥar*, which is the time between the ending of the night and the beginning of a new day. This time has a blend of shades of darkness of night and some rays of the light of day, and for this reason it has a double nature, just as magic has.[6] The majority of scholars have ruled that magic is real, due to the evidence in the Qur'an and the Hadith.

Magic may affect the eyes and give the appearance that something has happened, when in reality, it has not happened at all. This is mentioned in relation to the magicians of Pharaoh at the time of Prophet Moses (ﷺ):

﴿He [Moses] said: Throw, and when they threw, they bewitched the eyes of the people and struck terror into them, and they presented a great [feat of] magic.﴾ *(Qur'an 7: 116)*

As an illusion, it is the sight that is deceived and not the actual substance.

Another verse, about the same story, mentions the deceptive appearance of magic:

﴿They said: O Moses, either you throw or we will be the first to throw. He said: Rather, you throw. And suddenly their ropes and staffs seemed to him from their magic that they were moving [like snakes].﴾ *(Qur'an 20: 65-66)*

This deception can take many forms, depending on the specific goals of the magician.

One of the purposes of magic is to produce fear and apprehension within the heart of the observers so that they will submit to the magician and do as he or she requests.[7] The next verse

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=Arab Emirates: Dar Al Fatah, p. 98.

[5] Philips, 2005, p. 97.

[6] al-Sha'rawi, 1995, p. 15.

[7] Ibid., p. 21.

indicates this, as Moses (عليه السلام) himself became somewhat alarmed:

﴿And he sensed within himself apprehension, did Moses.﴾
(Qur'an 20: 67)

This is also highlighted in the first verse above:

﴿...they bewitched the eyes of the people and struck terror into them...﴾ *(Qur'an 7: 116)*

But Allah (سبحانه وتعالى) comforted Moses (عليه السلام) and reduced his worry:

﴿We [Allah] said: Fear not. Indeed, it is you who are superior.﴾
(Qur'an 20: 68)

Allah (سبحانه وتعالى) reminds Moses (عليه السلام) that He is more powerful than the tricks and deception of Satan. This is the main lesson to be gained from the trial of magic.

Magic is one of the methods commonly used by Satan to deceive people and to draw them into false worship. This applies both to the one who does magic and the one who requests his or her services. People become convinced of the magicians' special powers and attribute to them abilities that belong only to Allah (سبحانه وتعالى). It is for this reason that magic is considered to be a great evil, with the resultant penalty of death.

Magic and its effects result from the influence of the jinn. Since jinn have strength and power beyond that of humans, anyone who seeks their assistance will have additional power and ability. This is the reason that they are able to do things that ordinary people are not able to do.[8] It also explains why magic is considered to be a form of shirk and one of the greatest evils. The Prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم) said: «Avoid the seven deadly sins. He was asked: O Messenger of Allah! What are they? He said: Ascribing partners to Allah, sorcery, taking the life which Allah has forbidden except through justice, devouring usury, devouring an orphan's wealth, defecting from the battlefield, and

[8] Ibid., 1995, p. 26.

accusing and libelling chaste and pious believing women.» (recorded by Bukhari and Muslim)

The Prophet (ﷺ) also said: «He who consults a diviner or a soothsayer, and believes what he says, will have disbelieved in what was sent down to Muhammad (the Qur'an).» (a sound hadith recorded by Aḥmad and al-Ḥâkim)

Magic entails shirk in three aspects:

1. It involves seeking the assistance of devils, relying upon them for help, and doing things they desire in return for their services;
2. It implies the claim of knowing the unseen world and sharing this knowledge with Allah (ﷻ); those who make this claim ascribe partners to Allah by attributing to themselves characteristics that belong exclusively to Allah;[9]
3. It involves attempting to control others — their emotions, thoughts and life events — which is a power or ability that belongs only to Allah (ﷻ).

Magic, in fact, was created by Allah (ﷻ) and sent to humans as a test. Allah (ﷻ) says:

﴿And they followed [instead] what the devils had recited during the reign of Solomon. It was not Solomon who disbelieved, but the devils disbelieved, teaching people magic and that which was revealed to the two angels at Babylon, Hâroot and Mâroot. But they [the two angels] do not teach anyone unless they say: We are a trial, so do not disbelieve [by practicing magic]. And [yet] they learn from them that by which they cause separation between a man and his wife. But they do not harm anyone through it except by the permission of Allah. And they [the people] learn what harms them and does not benefit them. But the Children of Israel certainly knew

[9] al-Fozan, 1997, p. 47-48.

that whoever purchased the magic would not have in the hereafter any share. And wretched is that for which they sold themselves, if they only knew.﴾ *(Qur'an 2: 102)*

From this verse, it is understood that magic is a tribulation which leads to disbelief if practiced, it is used to harm people rather than benefit them, and it will result in an evil end, which is the fire in the hereafter. Magic can affect the physical and psychological well-being of the human being and cause sicknesses, marital or other relationship problems, and so forth.

Another verse which provides evidence is the following:

﴿And [I seek refuge] from the evil of the blowers in knots.﴾ *(Qur'an 113: 4)*

At the time that the Qur'an was revealed, blowing on knots was one of the methods by which evil spells were cast on people. The command to seek refuge from this evil provides further evidence that magic is real.

Even the Prophet (ﷺ) was bewitched by the magic of a Jew. 'Â'ishah (رضي الله عنها) said: «The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) was bewitched by one of the Jews of Banu Zurayq called Labid ibn al-A'sam. The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) began to imagine that he had done something when he had not. One day — or night — the Messenger of Allah made supplication for a long period, and then said: O 'Â'ishah, are you aware that Allah has informed me about the matter I asked Him about? Two men came to me. One of them sat at my head and the other at my feet. The one who was at my head asked the one who was at my feet (or vice versa): What is wrong with this man? The other man said: He is under the effect of magic. He asked: Who has bewitched him? He said: Labid ibn al-A'sam. He said: What was it done with? He replied: With a comb and the hair stuck to it and the skin of the pollen of a male date-palm. He said: Where is it? He said: In the well of Dhi Arwan. The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) went to that well with some of his Companions. Then he said: O 'Â'ishah, by

Allah, its water was red like an infusion of henna and its date-palms were like the heads of devils. 'Â'ishah asked: Messenger of Allah, did you burn it? He replied: No. Allah has cured me and I disliked to let evil spread among the people, so I ordered that the well be filled in.» (recorded by Bukhari and Muslim)

Evil eye and envy

Another method by which the jinn may influence humans is the evil eye. This involves a process whereby the glance of one person is capable of causing harm to another, primarily due to envy. It is not the eye that causes the harm, but rather the evil jinn. The enviers themselves may also act upon their feelings and do something harmful to those whom they envy. The reality of the phenomenon is mentioned in the Qur'an:

﴿And [I seek refuge] from the evil of an envier when he envies.﴾ *(Qur'an 113: 5)*

﴿Or do they envy people for what Allah has given them of His bounty...?﴾ *(Qur'an 4: 54)*

The Prophet (ﷺ) also said: «The effect of the evil eye is real, for if there were anything which could overtake destiny, it would have been (the effect of) the evil eye.» (recorded by Muslim)

Ibn al-Qayyim explains the relationship between the evil eye and envy:

> Every person who touches others by the evil eye is an envious person, but not vice versa. Since envy includes the evil eye in its general meaning, seeking refuge from it includes seeking refuge from the evil eye. The evil eye includes throwing arrows of envy that depart the envious heart and soul in the direction of the envied person, sometimes falling on its target. If the envied person is unarmed and unprepared, the evil eye will cause him

harm. If the envied person is prepared and armed, the arrows might turn back on the one who threw them.[10]

Envy may be of two types:

1. The desire that a particular blessing be removed from another person without the envier benefiting from it.
2. The desire for the blessing to be taken away from another because the envier wants to possess it.

The desire to have a blessing that someone else has, without wanting it to be taken away from that person, is permissible in Islam and is not considered envy. This is especially permissible in two cases: The Prophet (ﷺ) said: «Do not wish (enviously) to be like anyone except in two cases. The first is a person to whom Allah has given wealth and he spends it righteously; (the second is) one to whom Allah has given wisdom (knowledge of the Qur'an and Sunnah) and he acts according to it and teaches it to others.» (recorded by Bukhari)

The evil eye may come from humans or from the jinn. Umm Salamah (رضي الله عنها) said that: «The Prophet (ﷺ) once saw a young girl whose face had become dark and said: Recite over her incantations, for she has (the effect of) the glance (evil eye).» (recorded by Bukhari) This particular glance has been interpreted by some scholars to have been from the jinn.[11]

Jealousy is also different from envy in that it involves the strong desire to keep what one has and not to share it with others, while envy is the wish to get what one does not have. A woman, for example, may be jealous if her husband decides to take a second wife and may not want to share him with another. She may be envious if she thinks

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[10] al-Jawziyyah, I.Q., 2003, *Healing with the Medicine of the Prophet*, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia: Darussalam, p. 149.

[11] Philips, 1997, p. 109.

that another sister has a better husband than she and desires such for herself.

Envy may cause harm, and it is something that humans should seek refuge in Allah (ﷻ) from. There are various supplications that can be used for protection, as well as recitation of the last two chapters of the Qur'an and âyat al-kursi ('the verse of the footstool', *Qur'an 2: 255*). One who has been afflicted may do *ruqyah,* which involves using various Qur'anic verses or supplications to bring about a cure, with the help of Allah (ﷻ). Â'ishah (رضي الله عنها) narrated: «The Messenger of Allah ordered me to do ruqyah (if there was some effect) from an evil eye.» (recorded by Muslim) She also narrated: «The person who touched others with the evil eye was commanded to perform ablution, and the person whom he touched by the evil eye would wash with that water.» (recorded by Bukhari and Muslim)

Allah (ﷻ) advises humans to seek refuge in Him against the mischief of the envious ones as they practice envy:

﴿Say: I seek refuge in the Lord of the daybreak from the evil of that which He created, and from the evil of darkness when it settles, and from the evil of the blowers in knots, and from the evil of an envier when he envies.﴾ *(Qur'an 113: 1-5)*

Possession by jinn

Ibn Taymiyah wrote:

> The *jinn* entering the body of the humans is confirmed by the agreement of the leaders of the people of the Sunnah and the community (*ahl al-sunnah wa al-jama'ah*). Allah says in the Qur'an, ﴿Those who swallow usury cannot rise up save as he arises whom the devil has prostrated by his touch.﴾ *(Qur'an 2: 275)* And in the *Saḥeeḥ* it is recorded on the authority of the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him), «Satan flows in the

children of Adam like the flowing of the blood.» (a sound hadith recorded by Abu Dâwood)[12]

There are other hadiths as well which indicate that the jinn may enter the body of humans. Ya'lâ ibn Murrah (رضي الله عنه) said: «I saw Allah's Messenger do three things which no one before or after me saw. I went with him on a trip. On the way we passed by a woman sitting at the roadside with a young boy. She called out: O Messenger of Allah, this boy is afflicted with a trial, and from him we have also been afflicted with a trial. I do not know how many times per day he is seized by fits. He said: Give him to me. So she lifted him up to the Prophet. He then placed the boy between himself and the middle of the saddle, opened the boy's mouth and blew in it three times, saying: 'In the name of Allah; I am the slave of Allah. Get out, enemy of Allah!' Then he gave the boy back to her and said: Meet us on our return at this same place and inform us how he has fared. We then went. On our return, we found her in the same place with three sheep. When he said to her: How has your son fared? She replied: By the One who sent you with the truth, we have not detected anything (unusual) in his behaviour up to this time...» (a sound hadith recorded by Aḥmad and al-Ḥâkim)

Jinn possession is most often associated with epilepsy (as in the above-mentioned hadith), but is also considered a relevant explanation in some cases of insanity. The Arabic word for an insane person is *majnoon*, which suggests that such a person is possessed by the jinn. Ibn Taymiyah stated:

> The existence of the *jinn* is an established fact, according to the Book [i.e., the Qur'an], the Sunnah and the agreement of the early scholars. Likewise, the penetration of a *jinnee* into a human body is also an established fact, according to the consensus of

[12] Ibn Taymiyah, *Majmoo' al-Fatâwâ,* Vol. 24, p. 276; as quoted in al-Ashqar, 1998, p. 87.

leading Sunnee scholars. It is also a fact witnessed and experienced by anyone who reflects on it. The *jinnee* enters the one seized by fits and causes him to speak incomprehensible words, unknown to himself; if the one seized by fits is struck a blow sufficient to kill a camel, he does not feel it.[13]

Signs of jinn possession

According to research by Muslim exorcists, the following symptoms have been found in those possessed by jinn:

1. Changes of personality
   a. Rapid mood shifts
   b. Uncontrollable laughing or crying
   c. Depression
   d. Preference for solitude
2. Physical changes
   a. Preternatural strength
   b. Epileptic convulsions
   c. Catatonic symptoms
   d. Anaesthesia to pain
   e. Voice change
   f. Psychosomatic pains (especially migraine headaches)
3 Cognitive changes
   a. Glossolalia (speaking a language one does not know, or speaking elaborate but apparently meaningless speech)

[13] Ibn Taymiyah, *Majmoo' al-Fatâwâ*, Vol. 24, p. 277; as quoted in Philips, *The Exorcist Tradition in Islam,* p. 78.

b. Clouding of consciousness
c. Preternatural knowledge
d. Recurrent nightmares
e. Insomnia

4. Spiritual changes
   a. Strong reaction to Qur'anic recitation or the call to prayer
   b. Adverse reaction when touched by oil on which the Qur'an has been read; or when bathed in water over which the Qur'an has been read; or when water over which Qur'an has been read is drunk
   c. Abandonment of religious practices

Not all cases brought to the attention of religious leaders are true cases of demonic possession, as symptoms may also be caused by psychological, biological, or social factors.[14]

Ibn Taymiyah has suggested that the jinn possess humans for three reasons:

1. sensual desires on the part of the jinn, or even love;
2. play, jest or evil on the part of jinn;
3. jinn becoming angry due to some wrong that has been done to them. In the last situation, which is the most common, the jinn will attempt to punish those who wronged them. For example, if a person accidentally harms a jinni by urinating on him or by pouring hot water on him, the jinni may think that it was done intentionally. He may then try to take revenge by punishing the human more severely than he deserves.[15]

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[14] Philips, 1997, pp. 144-145.

[15] Ibn Taymeeyah's Essay on the Jinn (from Philips, *The Exorcist Tradition in Islam,* p. 93-4).

Possession is another one of the means that Satan attempts to pull humans into false worship. People who are possessed will seek the help of other humans, who may engage in various forms of shirk or idolatry in order to remove the jinn. They may, for example, call upon their false gods (Jesus or Buddha) during exorcism. One may ask how it is that they sometimes produce a cure when they are making use of bogus methods. The answer is that the jinn may leave by their own choice after their goal of leading humans to shirk was achieved. Their shirk will have been confirmed, and thus their false beliefs solidified. The jinn, of course, may easily re-enter the body, so it will not be a complete cure. The only true cure comes from the prescribed ruqyah from the Qur'an and Hadith and calling upon Allah alone for assistance. In this case, the jinn will be forced to leave the body.

Jinn primarily possess those individuals with little faith or religious proclivity, since they may easily attack and overcome them. As for the believers, they are granted protection from Allah (ﷻ) due to their following of the Sunnah in daily practices and supplications, including seeking refuge in Allah. Allah (ﷻ) says:

﴿Indeed, there is for him no authority over those who have believed and rely upon their Lord. His authority is only over those who take him as an ally and those who, through him, associate others with Allah.﴾ *(Qur'an 16: 99-100)*

The jinn actually fear the strong righteous believers, as in the case of 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭâb (رضي الله عنه). The Prophet (ﷺ) said: «Surely, I can see the devils among the jinn and among humankind fleeing from 'Umar.» (a sound hadith recorded by at-Tirmidhi)

It is important to mention that not all cases of insanity or epileptic seizures are due to evil jinn. Even early scholars recognized that they may be due to biological causes, and they understood the chronic nature of such illnesses. Biological theories of these diseases have advanced in modern times, almost to the point of obliterating

the 'supernatural' explanations. The key question, however, is not regarding which of the theories is true, but rather which is functioning in a particular patient. This requires a complete and accurate assessment and a multi-disciplinary approach involving the co-operation of medical doctors and religious experts.

Methods of Satan

Satan uses many methods to lead humans astray. He attempts to make sinning attractive and modifies his strategies based upon the weaknesses of the particular individual who is his target. The following are some of those methods:

Making evil seem appealing

Satan attempts to lure the human into misdeeds by making them attractive and appealing. He makes what is false seem as if it is the truth; and he hides the truth by making it appear as falsehood. In this way the person will be impelled to do evil and to turn away from the truth.[16] This fact is mentioned in the Qur'an:

﴿[Satan] said: My Lord, because You have put me in error, I will surely make [disobedience] attractive to them [humankind] on earth, and I will mislead them all. Except, among them, Your chosen servants.﴾ *(Qur'an 15: 39-40)*

Satan makes falsehood seem alluring by emphasizing the benefit that the human will obtain from it (although, in actuality, it leads to harm) and by giving pleasing names to the forbidden entities. The first instance of his evil works became evident in the story of Adam (عليه السلام) and Eve. Satan made eating from the forbidden tree seem to be a good and beneficial act by saying that it was the 'tree of eternal life' and that if they ate from it, they would live in paradise forever and

[16] al-Ashqar, 1998, pp. 96-97.

become like angels.[17] Allah (ﷻ) says:

﴿But Satan whispered to them to make apparent to them that which was concealed from them of their private parts. He said: Your Lord did not forbid you this tree except that you become angels or become of the immortal. And he swore [by Allah] to them: Indeed, I am to you from among the sincere advisors.﴾ *(Qur'an 7: 20-21)*

He adds to the enticement by indicating that he is a 'sincere advisor.'

Going to extremes

Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyah wrote:

> Allah never orders anything except that Satan takes two contradictory stances toward it: either shortcoming and negligence or overzealousness and exaggeration. It does not matter [to him] by which of these two mistakes he becomes victorious over the slave. He comes to the heart of the slave and examines it. If he finds in it listlessness and looking for loopholes, he deals with him from that vantage. He impedes him and makes him sit. He strikes him with laziness, listlessness and lethargy. He opens for him the door to reinterpretations, hopes and so forth until the slave may not fulfill anything of what he is commanded.
>
> If he finds in the slave's heart alertness, seriousness, desire to work and potential, Satan despairs from attacking him from the above means. Instead, he orders him to strive even harder. He convinces him that what he is doing is not sufficient for him. His ambition is to be greater than that. He must work more than the other workers...He makes him go to extremes and beyond the limits. He makes him stray from the straight path in the same way that he makes the first person fall short of the straight path

[17] Ibid., pp. 98, 100.

> and not approach it. Satan's intention for both is to keep them from the straight path: the first by making him not come close or near to it and the second by making him pass it and go beyond it. Many of creation are misled by these two strategies. There is no escape from them except deep knowledge, faith and the strength to fight Satan and stay along the middle path.[18]

In the first case, Satan deters the humans from beneficial actions by encouraging laziness, lethargy and procrastination. The individuals are led to believe that they have a long period of time to complete their work, and so they delay until they can no longer delay, and then they must rush to complete everything in a haphazard, incomplete, and imperfect manner. This aspect also applies to those who postpone in bringing themselves closer to Allah, purifying their souls, making repentance, and so forth. They may delay until the Angel of Death comes to them, at which time it will be too late.

The Prophet (ﷺ) said: «During your sleep, Satan ties three knots at the back of your necks. He breathes the following into them: The night is long, so keep on sleeping. If the person wakes and praises Allah, then one of the knots is unfastened. If he performs ablution, the second knot is unfastened. When he prays, all of the knots are unfastened. After that, he will be energetic and happy in the morning. Otherwise he will get up listless and grouchy.» (recorded by Bukhari)

Attacking human weaknesses

Satan attempts to attack the human through weaknesses of the soul. These weaknesses include, but are not limited to, pride, anger, greediness, miserliness, love of wealth, doubts, vanity, despair and fear. As mentioned earlier, part of the goal in life is to purify the soul from these weaknesses. Satan works to block anyone who attempts to

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[18] Ibn al-Qayyim, 2000, p. 19; as quoted in al-Ashqar, 1998, pp. 100-101.

achieve this goal. The path of following one's desires is easy, so Satan often does not need to work hard to misguide people. This can be accomplished by focusing on what the person loves or desires.

Ibn al-Qayyim wrote:

> Satan flows in humans like blood to the point that he meets with the human's soul and mixes with it. He asks it what it loves and what affects it. When he gets that knowledge, he uses it against the person. He gets to him through those means. Similarly, he informs his brothers and devotees. Among humans, when they desire their evil from each other, they get to each other through what they love and desire. For the one who enters through this door, it is a gate through which he will never be dissatisfied. If someone attempts to get to him through other means, the door will be closed to him. And he will be on a path that is closed in front of him.[19]

Taking a gradual approach

Satan generally does not guide people directly into committing major sins, for this approach is likely to be unsuccessful. Rather, he takes them step by step, in a gradual process, to greater acts of disobedience to Allah. If they are pleased with one step, Satan moves on to the next. An example would be the use of alcohol. A student may know that alcohol is wrong and say to himself that he will never drink. He meets some new friends (allies of Satan) at the university who happen to drink, and they invite him to a gathering at which there will be alcohol. Initially, he declines, but his friends convince him by telling him that he doesn't have to drink; he can just come and enjoy the socializing. He attends a few of these parties where everyone is drinking; at the next one, someone puts a glass of alcohol

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[19] Ibn al-Qayyim, *Ighaatha al-Luhfaan,* p. 132; as quoted in al-Ashqar, 1998, pp. 113-114.

in front of him and tells him to just take a sip. He decides to try it and says that he will only take one drink. At the following get-together, he drinks a complete glass, and so on, until he becomes a heavy drinker and addicted to alcohol. He is led to destruction by Satan in a very slow and steady manner.

Forgetfulness

Satan attempts to make people forgetful, so that they will not worship Allah (ﷻ) in an absolute manner:

﴿And We had already taken a promise from Adam before, but he forgot; and We found not in him determination.﴾ *(Qur'an 20: 115)*

Allah (ﷻ) prohibits the believers from sitting with those who mock the signs of Allah (ﷻ), but Satan makes them forget:

﴿And when you see those who engage in [offensive] discourse concerning Our verses, then turn away from them until they enter into another conversation. And if Satan should cause you to forget, then do not remain after the reminder with the wrongdoing people.﴾ *(Qur'an 6: 68)*

In cases where Satan gains complete control over the people, he will lead them to forget the remembrance of Allah (ﷻ) completely:

﴿Satan has overcome them and made them forget the remembrance of Allah. Those are the party of Satan. Unquestionably, the party of Satan — they will be the losers.﴾ *(Qur'an 58: 19)*

This is the greatest loss for the human being.

Protection from Satan and the evil jinn

There are several methods by which humans may protect themselves from the influence of Satan and the evil jinn. If Satan attempts to whisper or suggest evil, the individuals should seek refuge in Allah (ﷻ).

Allah (ﷻ) says:

﴿And if there comes to you from Satan an evil suggestion, then seek refuge in Allah. Indeed, He is the Hearing, the Knowing.﴾ *(Qur'an 41: 36)*

﴿And if an evil suggestion comes to you from Satan, then seek refuge in Allah. Indeed, He is Hearing and Knowing.﴾ *(Qur'an 7: 200)*

They may also recite various chapters or verses of the Qur'an, including the last two chapters (al-Falaq and an-Nâs), âyat al-kursi ('the verse of the footstool', *Qur'an 2: 255*), Soorat al-Baqarah, and the last two verses of Soorat al-Baqarah. It is also beneficial to read the Qur'an often, engage in frequent remembrance of Allah, and recite suitable supplications. An example of a supplication is in the following hadith:

The Messenger (ﷺ) said: «Whoever says: *Lâ ilâha ill-Allâhu waḥdahu lâ shareeka lahu, lahul-mulku wa lahul-ḥamdu wa Huwa 'alâ kulli shay'in Qadeer* (None has the right to be worshipped but Allah [Alone], Who has no partner; to Him belongs the kingdom [of the universe], and for Him are all the praises, and He has the power to do everything), one hundred times a day will get the same reward as given for freeing ten slaves; and one hundred good deeds will be written in his accounts, and one hundred sins will be deducted from his accounts, and it (his saying) will be a shield for him from Satan on that day until night, and nobody will be able to do a better deed except the one who does more than he.» (recorded by Bukhari)

Allah (ﷻ) mentions several times in the Qur'an that the believer will be protected from the workings of Satan:

﴿So when you recite the Qur'an, [first] seek refuge in Allah from Satan, the expelled [from His mercy]. Indeed, there is for him no authority over those who have believed and rely upon their Lord. His authority is only over those who take him as an ally and those who, through him, associate others with Allah.﴾ *(Qur'an 16: 98-100)*

﴿Indeed, over My [believing] servants there is for you no authority. And sufficient is your Lord as disposer of affairs.﴾

(Qur'an 17: 65)

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

Abnormal Psychology and Mental Illness

﴿By time, indeed, humankind is in loss, except for those who have believed and done righteous deeds and advised each other to truth and advised each other to patience.﴾ *(Qur'an 103: 1-3)*

The topic of mental illness is extensive and requires a book of its own, but we will cover some of the main points here. There are probably more than one hundred different types of mental illness known to human experience. The two most common mental illnesses are depression and anxiety. Both of them can be debilitating diseases that may lead to such an extreme that the person attempts to end his or her life due to the associated anguish and suffering. Depression is often a response to past or current loss, while anxiety is generally a response to the threat of future loss.

Defining mental illness

Grief is an innate aspect of the human experience and can be considered to be the opposite of happiness. Grief is mentioned in the Qur'an in several places. Allah (ﷻ) told the Prophet (ﷺ) not to grieve over the disbelievers:

﴿And do not be grieved [O Muhammad] by those who hasten into disbelief. Indeed, they will never harm Allah at all...﴾

(Qur'an 3: 176)

﴿Perhaps [O Muhammad] you would kill yourself with grief that they will not be believers.﴾ *(Qur'an 26: 3)*

The Prophet Jacob (عليه السلام) was saddened by the loss of his son Joseph (عليه السلام), even though he was patient, relied upon Allah, and tried to cover his grief.

﴿And he turned away from them and said: Oh, my sorrow over Joseph, and his eyes became white [he lost his sight] from grief, for he was [of that] a suppressor.﴾ *(Qur'an 12: 84)*

He did not express his grief or anger, although he suspected that his other sons had something to do with Joseph's disappearance.

Those who follow Allah's guidance will experience no fear or grief. This is one of the promises of Allah (سبحانه وتعالى), and it will be most important on the Day of Judgment:

﴿We said: Go down from it, all of you. And when guidance comes to you from Me, whoever follows My guidance — there will be no fear concerning them, nor will they grieve.﴾ *(Qur'an 2: 38)*

People feel grief at various times due to difficulties and challenges in life, but it is generally a temporary state. Depression is distinct from grief in that it is more severe and prolonged, even to the point of being a chronic condition. The Arabic term for depression is *ikti'âb,* which comes from the root word *ka'iba,* meaning to be dejected, dispirited, downcast, or sad.[1] It implies deep sorrow and grief. The symptoms of depression include: depressed mood, loss of interest in pleasurable activities, feelings of worthlessness and guilt, poor concentration, changes in appetite and weight (either increase or decrease), changes in sleep (either insomnia, which is the inability to

[1] Wehr, 1974, p. 807.

sleep well, or hypersomnia, which is sleeping much more than necessary), and suicidal thoughts.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), depression is the leading cause of disability worldwide and the fourth leading contributor to the global burden of disease. By the year 2020, it is expected to reach second place in the global burden of disease for all ages and both genders. On a yearly basis, depression affects 121 million people worldwide, which is approximately ten percent of women and six percent of men.[2]

Anxiety disorders are characterized by distressing and persistent nervousness, apprehension and worry, or maladaptive behaviours that reduce the anxiety. The most common anxiety disorders are:

— Generalized anxiety disorder: persistent feelings of anxiety and tension, worry that bad things might happen, muscle tension, agitation and insomnia.

— Panic disorder: panic attacks, which are sudden, brief episodes of intense fear that include symptoms like heart palpitations, shortness of breath, choking sensations, trembling and dizziness. The symptoms are often perceived as a heart attack or other physical ailment.

— Phobias: irrational fears that focus on a specific object, activity, or situation such as heights, blood, animals, tunnels, or flying.

— Obsessive-compulsive disorder: obsessive, repetitive thoughts that cause anxiety, followed by compulsive or repetitive behaviour to reduce the anxiety. The most common example is obsessive concern with dirt and germs

[2] World Health Organization, Depression, retrieved February 2, 2010 from www.who.int/mental_health/management/depression/definition/en/print.hmtl.

and excessive hand washing, bathing, or brushing the teeth to eliminate them.[3]

Another word that is used in the Qur'an to signify psychological stress is *ḍâqat,* which means to be or become narrow, straitened, or confined. It also means to be anguished, uneasy, depressed, or dejected. The noun *ḍeeq* means narrowness, tightness, or confinement, as well as anguish, depression, distress, worry, or anxiety.[4] One who is depressed or anxious will feel constriction and tightness, as if the world is closing in on them.

This term was used in the story of the three Companions who failed to join the Messenger (ﷺ) in the Battle of Tabook. The three men were Ka'b ibn Mâlik, Hilâl ibn Umayyah and Murarah ibn ar-Rabee' (may Allah be pleased with them) of the *Anṣâr* [the Muslim citizens of Madinah who gave refuge to the Prophet (ﷺ) and the other Muslim emigrants from Makkah].

﴿And [He also forgave] the three who were left behind [and regretted their error] to the point that the earth closed in on them, in spite of its vastness, and their souls confined [anguished] them, and they were certain that there is no refuge from Allah except in Him. Then He turned to them so they could repent. Indeed, Allah is the accepting of repentance, the Merciful.﴾ *(Qur'an 9: 118)*

Initially, the Prophet (ﷺ) did not accept their excuses for failing to join the battle, and thus the Muslims ignored them for fifty days and nights. Ka'b ibn Mâlik (رضي الله عنه) described this experience : «When I had finished the dawn prayer on the fiftieth morning on the roof of one of our houses, while sitting in the condition in which Allah described (in the Qur'an): my very soul seemed straitened to me, and even the earth seemed narrow to me for all its spaciousness.» (recorded by Bukhari and Muslim)

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[3] Myers, 2007, pp. 649-652.

[4] Wehr, 1974, pp. 548-549.

Thereafter, Allah (ﷻ) accepted their repentance, and they were relieved from the confinement of their souls.

Another incident occurred in the Battle of Ḥunayn. The Muslims were proud of their large numbers, but their numbers did not benefit them at all; they became confined and retreated from the battle. Allah (ﷻ) says:

﴿Allah has already given you victory in many regions and [even] on the day of Ḥunayn, when your great number pleased you, but it did not avail you at all, and the earth was confining for you with [in spite of] its vastness; then you turned back, fleeing.﴾ *(Qur'an 9: 25)*

Allah (ﷻ) sent help to His Messenger (ﷺ), and then they were victorious.[5]

This concept of confinement or constriction is also used in the Qur'an to refer to the heart or the chest (breast). For example, regarding the disbelievers, Allah (ﷻ) says:

﴿...And whoever He wants to misguide — He makes his chest tight and constricted, as though he were climbing into the sky. Thus does Allah place defilement upon those who do not believe.﴾

(Qur'an 6: 125)

He also says to Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ), regarding those who mock the religion of Allah:

﴿And we already know that your breast is constrained by what they say.﴾ *(Qur'an 15: 97)*

Prophet Lot (عليه السلام) also felt constriction and distress when the angels came to destroy the city.

﴿And when Our messengers [angels] came to Lot, he was distressed for them and felt for them great discomfort. They said: Fear not, nor grieve...﴾ *(Quran 29: 33)*

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[5] Ibn Kathir, 2000, Vol. 4, pp. 397-400.

Suicide

Each year, approximately 850,000 people worldwide end their lives by suicide. An additional twelve to twenty-five non-fatal suicide attempts are made for every one of these deaths. There are various risk factors for suicide, including depression and other mental disorders, substance abuse disorders, family history of these disorders, family history of suicide, history of trauma or abuse, and so on. More than ninety percent of those who commit suicide have one of the first two risk factors.[6]

Some of the protective factors for suicide include effective care for mental and substance abuse disorders, strong connections to family, community support, and cultural and religious beliefs that discourage suicide and emphasize self-preservation.[7] Religiosity, in particular, has been found to be a strong protective factor against suicide. Researchers of suicide have found that rates of suicide are much lower in Muslim countries.[8] Religiosity and religious commitment act as protective factors for both Muslims and non-Muslims. This is hypothesized to be related to basic life-preserving values, beliefs, and practices that reduce rates of suicide.[9] For Muslims, the injunctions against suicide in religious texts, as well as the fear of eternal damnation in hellfire, are likely to play a role.[10]

The Prophet (ﷺ) said: «None of you should wish for death because of a calamity befalling him, but if he were to wish for death,

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[6] Suicide Resource Prevention Center, Risk and Protective Factors for Suicide, retrieved February 2, 2010 from http://www.sprc.org/library/srisk.pdf.

[7] Ibid.

[8] Mohyuddin, F., 2008, Suicide in the Muslim world, *International Journal of Child Health and Human Development, 1*(3), pp. 273-279.

[9] Dervic, K., Oquendo, M. A., Grunebaum, M. F., Ellis, S., Burke, A. K., & Mann, J. J., 2004, Religious affiliation and suicide attempt, *American Journal of Psychiatry, 161*(12), pp. 2303-2308.

[10] Mohyuddin, 2008, pp. 273-279.

he should say: O Allah! Keep me alive as long as life is better for me, and let me die if death is better for me.» (recorded by Bukhari)

The Prophet (ﷺ) also said: «...And none of you should wish for death, for if he is a good-doer, he may increase his good deeds, and if he is an evil-doer, he may repent to Allah.» (recorded by Bukhari)

The Prophet (ﷺ) said: «Whoever kills himself with an iron weapon will be carrying that weapon in his hand and stabbing his abdomen with it in the hellfire, wherein he will abide for all eternity; whoever drinks poison and kills himself with it, he will be carrying his poison in his hand and drinking it in the (hell) fire, wherein he will abide for all eternity; and whoever purposely throws himself from a mountain and kills himself will be in the hellfire, falling down into it, and abiding therein for all eternity.» (recorded by Bukhari)

Al-Khater mentions an important point in relation to this hadith. The punishment mentioned here will be applied only to those who committed suicide intentionally while they were of sane mind. People who suffer from severe depression or other mental illness may not be considered legally responsible, depending on the severity of the disorder.[11] Allah (ﷻ) will judge them on the Day of Resurrection and send them to their appropriate destination. For this reason, one cannot justify the claim that everyone who commits suicide will be condemned to hell.

Causes of mental illness

Modern scientific theories of mental illness postulate that it has various causes, including biological factors (genetics or neuro-chemical imbalances in the brain), learning experiences, stressful life events, cognitive distortions, and so on. The social-cognitive model

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[11] al-Khater, A., 2001, *Grief and Depression from an Islamic Perspective*, London: Al-Firdous Ltd, pp. 26-27.

of depression, for example, consists of

1. negative, stressful events interpreted through
2. a ruminating, pessimistic explanatory style, which creates
3. a hopeless, depressed state that
4. hampers the way the person thinks and acts, which then fuels more negative experiences, such as rejection. Some critics have noted that this cycle may coincide with depression but does not necessarily cause it.[12]

Islam recognizes that these factors may have an influence. Some mental illnesses may be purely biological in nature or set off by a series of stressful life events, but the Islamic theory of mental illness emphasizes the concept of spiritual disease or death. In fact, many of today's mental illnesses most likely have their roots in this phenomenon. The soul is calling out in distress for its spiritual needs, but the call is not being answered. This does not necessarily imply that someone who suffers from mental illness is morally deficient, but distance from Allah (ﷻ) may increase the likelihood of such disorders. For example, a person whose eemân is low may struggle to come up with explanations for stressful life events or may be more easily affected by the influence of the jinn.

Allah (ﷻ) mentions the effects of turning away from Him:

﴿And whoever turns away from My remembrance — indeed, he will have a depressed [difficult] life, and We will gather [raise] him on the Day of Resurrection blind.﴾ *(Qur'an 20: 124)*

Those who refuse to believe and who turn away from the remembrance of Allah will experience an arduous life. This is in reference to the many forms of difficulty that a human may face, such as depression, anxiety, grief and so on, as well as various stressful life events. Their weaknesses and desires may also overwhelm them,

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[12] Myers, 2007, pp. 668-669.

causing further distress. Due to their disbelief, Allah (ﷻ) allows them to continue in their misguidance and misery to the point of self-destruction, eventually ending up in the hellfire for eternity.

Ibn Katheer explained this verse as meaning:

> His life will be hard in this world. He will have no tranquility and no expanding of his breast (ease). Rather, his chest will be constrained and in difficulty due to his misguidance. Even if he appears to be in comfort outwardly and he wears whatever he likes, eats whatever he likes and lives wherever he wants, he will not be happy. For verily, his heart will not have pure certainty and guidance. He will be in agitation, bewilderment and doubt. He will always be in confusion and a state of uncertainty. This is from the hardship of life.[13]

In the case of spiritual death, those who persistently adhere to false beliefs and practices in their lives, due to their own choices, will have seals put over their hearts. This will lead to an existential vacuum and spiritual non-being. People who live their lives without faith in Allah will lose touch with their own true selves. Allah (ﷻ) mentions:

﴿And be not like those who forgot Allah, so He made them forget themselves...﴾ *(Qur'an 59: 19)*

He also said:

﴿And whoever turns away from My remembrance — indeed, he will have a depressed [difficult] life, and We will gather [raise] him on the Day of Resurrection blind.﴾ *(Qur'an 20: 124)*

This weakening of faith may appear in the form of mental illness or distress. The next verses give further explanation for their distress:

﴿He will say: My Lord, why have you raised me blind while I was [once] seeing? [Allah] will say: Thus did Our signs come to you, and

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[13] Ibn Kathir, 2000, Vol. 6, p. 406.

you forgot [disregarded] them; and thus will you this day be forgotten.﴾ *(Qur'an 20: 125-126)*

One aspect of a lack of faith is to love something else more than Allah, the Exalted, the Almighty. Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyah wrote, regarding the consequences for those who take an object of love above Allah:

> For this person, it is Allah's way to turn the object of his love and everything that relates to it into a source of grief and sorrow, in return for having placed his own desires and the desires of those people who esteem or love him higher than his love of Allah. For Allah has decreed, as a part of destiny which cannot be turned back or repelled, that he who loves something other than Allah will surely be tormented by it; that one who fears someone other than Allah will come under his control; that one who involves himself with something to the exclusion of Allah will find it a source of grief; that one who prefers another to Allah will not be blessed therein; and that one who tries to please a fellow creature by anything displeasing to Allah will, without fail, bring Allah's anger upon himself.[14]

The Islamic theory also incorporates matters of the unseen world, which includes jinn. Disobedience of Allah (ﷻ) leaves the door open for the jinn and Satan to easily prey on the human being. Through the working of magic, envy, whispering and even possession, the jinn may cause all sorts of psychological and social problems, including distress, anxiety and depression. Allah (ﷻ) mentions:

﴿Man is not weary of supplication for good [things], but if evil touches him, he is hopeless and despairing.﴾ *(Qur'an 41: 49)*

﴿And whoever is blinded from remembrance of the Most Merciful — We appoint for him a devil, and he is to him a companion. And

[14] Al-Jawziyyah, 2000, p. 6.

indeed, they [devils] divert them from the way [of guidance] while they think that they are [rightly] guided.﴾ *(Qur'an 43: 36-37)*

This devil can wreak havoc with the psychological well-being of the individual, as we discussed in the section on Satan and the jinn.

This phenomenon has been confirmed by scientific studies. Faith healers in Saudi Arabia report that the most common psychological symptoms caused by the evil eye, magic, or jinn possession include anxiety, obsessions and fear of developing disease. Other psychological symptoms noted by the faith healers included insomnia, depressive ideas, hatred (mainly of a spouse or co-wife), estrangement (between spouses or co-wives), hyperactivity, seizure-like states, psychotic disturbance, altered consciousness, abnormal movements, somatic complaints, and others.[15]

Religiosity and mental health

In terms of scientific research, there has been an explosion of interest in recent years regarding the link between religiosity/spirituality and mental health. Much of this research suggests a relationship between these variables, indicating that those who are more religious or spiritual tend to have better mental (and physical) health. In the area of mental health, more than five hundred studies have found a significant positive association between religiosity/spirituality and better mental health and well-being. This specifically includes less depression and faster recovery from depression, less anxiety, lower suicide rates and less substance abuse. Greater well-being encompasses more hope, optimism, purpose and meaning in

[15] al-Habeeb, T. A., 2004, Pilot study of faith healers' views on the evil eye, jinn possession, and magic in Saudi Arabia, retrieved March 3, 2010 from http://www.daarussalaam.com/A-STRARAGIES/A15mass/09PilotStudy.pdf.

life, greater marital satisfaction and stability, and higher levels of social support.[16]

While most of this research has been conducted with Christian populations in the West, a recent literature review of a growing body of studies with Muslim populations suggests that religiosity/spirituality also benefits the mental health of Muslim adherents.[17] This relationship encompasses a multitude of variables, including greater happiness, well-being, life satisfaction and optimism, and reduced likelihood of depression, anxiety, death anxiety, antisocial behaviour and suicide. Basically, what this means is that Muslims who are religious/spiritual and practice their faith are healthier and happier.

Studies have found, for example, that persons who are spiritual and view God as warm, caring, helpful and dependable are less likely to be lonely, depressed, or anxious. They also cope better with major life stressors (ranging from illness to war) and are less likely to abuse drugs. As this link is established, more and more people emphasize the role of spirituality and religion in providing not only curative potential for mental illness, but also preventive power as well. In Islam, this understanding is fundamental to the nature of humankind and to success in this life. The closer one is to Allah (ﷻ), the more he or she increases in righteousness and elevates his or her existence.

In a society faced with so many of these ills and lacking any form of spirituality, the connection between the two becomes readily apparent. Allah, the Exalted, the Almighty has provided the cure in the Qur'an, and it is available for every human being. Even those who suffer from mental illness can be relieved by maintaining hope

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[16] Koenig, H. G., McCullough, M. E., & Larson, D. B., 2001, *Handbook of Religion and Health,* Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 97-203. Koenig, H. G., 2008, *Medicine, Religion, and Health: Where Science and Spirituality Meet,* West Conshohocken, PA: Templeton Foundation Press, pp. 68-81.

[17] Utz and Oman, forthcoming [2011].

in Allah's mercy, returning to Him in repentance, and relying upon Him for a cure.

Allah (ﷻ) mentions in the Qur'an the importance of guidance, because it is through guidance that the seeker finds the truth and the food that is necessary for the soul.

﴿Whoever is guided is only guided for [the benefit of] his soul, and whoever errs only errs against it. No bearer of burdens will bear the burden of another, and never would We punish until We sent a messenger.﴾ *(Qur'an 17: 15)*

﴿Indeed, We sent down to you the book for the people of truth. So whoever is guided — it is for [the benefit of] his soul; and whoever goes astray only goes astray to its detriment...﴾ *(Qur'an 39: 41)*

﴿Say: O people, the truth has come to you from your Lord, so whoever is guided is only guided for [the benefit of] his soul, and whoever goes astray only goes astray [in violation] against it.﴾ *(Qur'an 10: 108)*

﴿So is one whose breast Allah has expanded to [accept] Islam and he is guided by a light from his Lord [like one whose heart rejects it?] Then woe to those whose hearts are hardened against the remembrance of Allah. Those are in manifest error.﴾ *(Qur'an 39: 22)*

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

Counselling and Psychotherapy

Psychotherapy has been defined as:

> A formal process of interaction between two parties, each party usually consisting of one person but with the possibility that there may be two or more people in each party, for the purpose of amelioration of distress in one of the two parties relative to any or all of the following areas of disability or malfunction: cognitive functions (disorders of thinking), affective functions (suffering or emotional discomforts), or behavioral functions (inadequacy of behavior), with the therapist having some theory of personality's origins, development, maintenance and change along with some method of treatment logically related to the theory and professional and legal approval to act as a therapist.[1]

At least 250 different systems of psychotherapy have been noted to exist, with possibly up to more than four hundred.[2] Most psychotherapists do not adhere strictly to one single school of thought; instead they take an eclectic approach, in which they select from the variety of techniques those that are likely to be the most

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[1] Corsini, R.J., 2000, Introduction, in Corsini, R.J., & Wedding, D. (Eds.), *Current Psychotherapies.* Itasca, IL: F. E. Peacock Publishers, Inc., p. 1.

[2] Ibid., p. 10.

appropriate and effective for a particular client.

Psychologists who provide therapy have generally obtained a graduate degree (studying four or five years) in clinical or counselling psychology. The degree will be either a PhD (Doctor of Philosophy) or a Psy.D (Doctor of Psychology). The PhD degree focuses on training in research as well as diagnosis and therapy. The Psy.D is an applied degree, emphasizing diagnosis and treatment. Clinical psychologists generally work with people suffering from a wide range of mental disorders, from adjustment problems to depression, from anxiety to schizophrenia. Counselling psychologists focus more on problems related to adjustment, life stress, and the like; they may concentrate on specific areas such as student, marriage, or family counselling.

Psychiatrists are medical doctors who are licensed to prescribe medications and to treat physical causes of psychological disorders. They may also provide psychotherapy as psychologists do. A psychiatrist has an MD degree and has completed three years of residency (after medical school) in a mental health facility. In some countries, though, psychologists who have received training are now allowed to prescribe medications.

Unfortunately, most of the training available today for psychologists and psychiatrists is of a secular nature. Many professionals in the Muslim world have trained abroad and then returned to practice. This often leads to various types of problems, since there may be a discrepancy between what the professional is offering through the counselling process and what the clients are expecting or hoping to receive.

Mechanisms of action

Before discussing the specific mechanisms of action, it should be noted that an essential variable within the psychotherapeutic

process is the client's motivation or willingness to change. If this element is missing, it is difficult or impossible to make any progress, as most mental health professionals will attest. This requires that the client take responsibility for his or her behaviour and choices, and exert effort to make the necessary changes. This particular aspect is actually referred to in the Qu'ran. Allah (ﷻ) says:

﴿That is because Allah would not change a favour which He had bestowed upon a people until they change what is within themselves. And indeed, Allah is Hearing and Knowing.﴾ *(Qur'an 8: 53)*

This verse indicates that human beings have the ability to change their negative characteristics and to develop healthy personalities and behaviours. They have the potential to overcome weaknesses within themselves as well as, to some extent, environmental factors that may seem to block the way. This philosophy is an essential foundation for effective psychotherapeutic intervention.

Some of the more common schools of psychotherapy include cognitive therapy, behaviour therapy, person-centred or humanistic therapy, psychoanalysis and existential psychotherapy. Psychotherapy may occur on an individual basis, in a group setting, or in a family context. Regardless of the particular title or perspective taken, the vast majority of the theories are based upon a secular worldview, as discussed above.

Psychotherapy is hypothesized to be effective for various reasons. Each school of psychotherapy will state what it presumes to be the mechanisms of action, but Corsini has outlined the elements that seem to be necessary for changing people.

Cognitive factors:

1. Universalization: clients improve when they realize that they are not alone, that others have similar problems, and that human suffering is universal;

2. Insight: growth occurs as clients come to understand themselves and others, and gain different perspectives on their own motives, thoughts, feelings, and behaviours;
3. Modelling: people learn from watching and imitating other people.

Affective factors:

1. Acceptance: this reflects the sense of getting unconditional positive regard, especially from the therapist;
2. Altruism: change can result from the recognition that one is the recipient of the love and care of the therapist or other members of the group, or from being the one who provides love and care to others, as well as feeling he or she is helping others;
3. Transference: identifies the emotional bond that occurs between the therapist and the client, or among clients in a group setting.

Behavioural factors:

1. Reality testing: change becomes possible when clients experiment with new behaviours in the safety of therapy, receiving support and feedback from the therapist;
2. Ventilation: there is some value in 'blowing off steam' through shouting, crying, or displaying anger in a context in which one can still feel accepted;
3. Interaction: clients improve when they are able to openly admit that there is something wrong with themselves or their behaviour.[3]

[3] Ibid., pp. 9-10.

It is interesting to note that the authors summed these three factors up as, "Know thyself, love thy neighbour, and do good works."[4]

The scientific naturalistic worldview of the secular approach is problematic for the clinical situation and, according to Richards and Bergin, poses insoluble problems for mental health practitioners and researchers. They state:

> Scientific naturalism provides an impoverished view of human nature upon which it is difficult to build theories of personality and therapeutic change. Scientific naturalism also constrains, biases, and ultimately forecloses many conceptual and clinical options that would otherwise be open to therapists and researchers. Finally, scientific naturalism conflicts with the worldviews of major theistic world religions, and thereby fails to provide a culturally sensitive psychotherapy framework for religious clients who seek assistance from mental health professionals.[5]

The secular psychotherapeutic approaches of modern psychology, while offering some relief for human suffering, fail to address the complexities of the soul and its spiritual needs. In criticizing these schools of thought, Badri states:

> It is not surprising, therefore, that these psychological schools [behaviorism, Freudian psychoanalysis, and neuropsychiatry] and their artificial oversimplification of complex cognitive activities and feelings, in spite of securing respect for many years by providing scientific explanations of human behavior, have failed to provide satisfactory results. The optimism of fifty years ago has now dissipated, and the social and psychological problems of Western societies are probably the only variables

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[4] Ibid.

[5] Richards & Bergin, 2005, p. 41.

> that have surpassed economic inflation in their sharp increase. Their failure is not surprising since the psychology of humankind, with all its complex variables and spiritual aspects could never be reduced to the chemical and physical data of laboratory experiments.[6]

If we understand that the cause of mental distress and illness is spiritual in nature, resulting from a distancing from Allah (ﷻ) and His commands, we can easily ascertain from whence may come the cure. From the perspective of Islam, the ultimate goal of therapy is not simply to change thinking, emotion, or behaviour, but rather to have an impact upon the soul. This impact, in turn, will affect the other components of the human being. The foundation of any interventions will revolve around the spiritual development of the client. The focus on spiritual aspects will enhance the likelihood of effective and enduring outcomes. This is in contrast to secular approaches that focus on symptoms rather than addressing the primary cause, generally resulting in short-lived effects.

Religious or theological psychotherapy

In mainstream Western psychology in recent years, there has been a growing recognition of the importance of religious and spiritual topics and concerns in clinical practice.[7] There has been a corresponding acknowledgment of the role of religion and spirituality in the psychotherapeutic process, and acceptance that it can be an important part of the solution to psychological problems.[8]

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[6] Badri, 2000, p. 5.

[7] Richards & Bergin, 2005, pp. 6-7; Dein, S., & Loewenthal, K. M., 1998, Holy healing: The growth of religious and spiritual therapies, *Mental Health, Religion & Culture, 1(2),* pp. 85-89.

[8] Pargament, K. I., Murray-Swank, N. A., & Tarakeshwar, N., 2005, An empirically based rationale for a spiritually integrated psychotherapy, *Mental=*

Some of the researchers in this area have termed this integration of spiritual issues into the therapeutic process 'theistic psychotherapy.' It is interesting to note that Islam is listed as one of the major world traditions that would be commensurate with this approach. According to Richards and Bergin, the philosophical foundations of this approach include:

Scientific theism: God is the ultimate controller of the universe, and humans can understand Him and the universe in a limited way. Scientific methods can discover some aspects of reality, but spiritual ways of knowing are also necessary.

Theistic holism: Human beings are holistic spiritual beings, composed of an eternal soul or spirit that interacts with and influences other dimensions of reality (physical, cognitive, emotional, interpersonal, and cultural). Humans cannot be reduced to their biology, mind, or relationships.

Agency: Human beings have moral agency and the ability to choose and regulate their behaviour. Human behaviour has antecedents (biological and environmental) that limit their choices, but not their agency. Choices also have consequences.

Moral universalism: There are universal moral principles or values that affect the health and psychological and spiritual development. The application may vary depending on time, context, and other competing values.

Theistic relationism: Human beings are innately social and relational and can best be understood through studying their relationships with others and with God.

Altruism: Human beings often forego their own rewards for the welfare of others. Concepts such as responsibility, self-sacrifice and altruism are valued above personal gratification.[9]

=*Health, Religion and Culture, 8(3),* pp. 155-165.

[9] Richards & Bergin, 2005, pp. 98-99.

Some of the benefits of this particular theoretical approach to the practice of psychotherapy include:

1. Providing a more positive view of the world and human nature.
2. Affirming the spiritual nature and potential of human beings.
3. Avoiding dehumanizing people into mechanistic, deterministic components.
4. Affirming the reality of human agency, choice, and responsibility, while accepting limits to human choices.
5. Providing a moral and ethical framework that can be used to evaluate whether values and lifestyle choices are healthy.
6. Affirming the importance of relationships and community and encouraging social connection with others and with God.
7. Affirming the value of sacrifice and service to others and the welfare of families and society.[10]

A common approach of theistic psychotherapy has been to integrate religiously-based beliefs and concepts in the context of a cognitive-behavioural therapy framework. This generally involves replacing detrimental beliefs and attributions about the self, others, and the world with more positive religiously-based beliefs and attributions, as well as utilizing various other cognitive approaches. Research has demonstrated the effectiveness of some of these approaches for several different populations.[11]

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[10] Ibid.

[11] Hawkins, R. S., Tan, S. Y., & Turk, A. A., 1999, Secular versus Christian inpatient cognitive-behavioral therapy programs: Impact on depression and spiritual well-being, *Journal of Psychology and Theology, 27,* pp. 309-311; Johnson, W. B., 2001, To dispute or not to dispute: Ethical REBT with Religious Clients, *Cognitive & Behavioral Practice, 8(1),* pp. 39-47; Johnson,=

Religious psychotherapy with Muslims

Jafari delineates four basic value differences between Western and Islamic systems of psychotherapy:[12]

1. Self-Fulfilling Life Style versus Righteous Benevolence — Western counselling is individual-focused, with an emphasis on personal achievement and satisfaction, competitiveness, self-interest, assertiveness, and freedom to choose. While taking into consideration the individual's rights and freedom, Islam places equal or greater emphasis on the principle of mutual responsibility, which is reflected in the concepts of Ummah and brotherhood. Islamic counselling then would promote selflessness, altruism, and happiness for others.
2. Materialistic versus Holistic Outlook — In the Western value system, success is based upon materialistic life goals such as excellence, attainment of social status and material rewards. Islam, on the other hand, encourages holistic growth in both the material and spiritual domains. Actualization is achieved by aligning one's thoughts,

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=W. B., & Ridley, C. R., 1992, Brief Christian and non-Christian rational-emotive therapy with depressed Christian clients: An exploratory study, *Counseling and Values, 36(3),* pp. 220-229; Johnson, W. B., DeVries, R., Ridley, C. R., Pettorini, D., & Peterson, D. R., 1994, The comparative efficacy of Christian and secular rational-emotive therapy with Christian clients, *Journal of Psychology and Theology, 22(2),* pp. 130-140; Peucher, D. & Edwards, K. J., 1984, A comparison of secular and religious versions of cognitive therapy with depressed Christian college students, *Journal of Psychology and Theology, 12,* pp. 45-54; Propst, L. R., Ostrom, R., Watkins, P., Dean, T., & Mashburn, D., 1992, Comparative efficacy of religious and nonreligious cognitive-behavioral therapy for the treatment of clinical depression in religious individuals, *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, 60*(1), pp. 94-103.

[12] Jafari, 1993, pp. 330-333.

emotions, and behaviours with Allah's divine will and seeking His pleasure.

3. Unlimited versus Bounded Freedom — In Western counselling, individuals are generally free to pursue personal goals without any religious or moral constraint; this is generally associated with changes of loyalty, lack of commitment, and evasion of responsibility. In the Islamic framework, freedom is bound within the limits of Sharia, for both public and private behaviour. The concepts of right and wrong are clearly explicated and actualized through a system of accountability.
4. Guilt Rationalization versus Repentance — Western counselling rationalizes wrongdoing in order to alleviate feelings of guilt by offering unconditional positive regard, acceptance, support and empathy. In Islam, sinful conduct can never be condoned; instead, the process of repentance is encouraged for correcting and modifying behaviour and assisting in spiritual purification.[13]

It is for this reason that psychotherapy needs to be structured in such a way as to fit the worldview of Muslim patients. Several research studies have reported positive results for religious psychotherapy in the treatment of anxiety, depression, and bereavement with Muslim patients.[14] In each of these studies, clients

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[13] Ibid.

[14] Azhar, M. Z., Varma, S. L., & Dharap, A. S., 1994, Religious psychotherapy in anxiety disorder patients, *Acta Psychiatrica Scandinavica, 90*(1), pp. 1-3; Azhar, M. Z., & Varma, S. L., 1995a, Religious psychotherapy in depressive patients, *Psychotherapy and Psychosomatics, 63,* pp. 165-168; Azhar, M. Z., & Varma, S. L., 1995b, Religious psychotherapy as management of bereavement, *Acta Psychiatrica Scandinavica, 91*(4), pp. 233-235; Razali, S. M., Hasanah, C. I., Aminah, K., & Subramaniam, M., 1998, Religious-sociocultural psychotherapy in patients with anxiety and depression,=

in the religious psychotherapy groups responded significantly more quickly than those receiving standard treatment. In Islamic religious psychotherapy, unproductive beliefs are identified and then modified or replaced with beliefs derived from Islam (the Qur'an and Sunnah), using a variant of cognitive therapy.[15] Religious issues and cultural beliefs related to the illness may be discussed, with advice provided on how to modify one's lifestyle to adhere to the customs of Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ). Patients may also be encouraged to repent if they experience guilt or sinful behaviour.[16]

Hamdan has also outlined several beneficial cognitions from the Islamic tradition that may be integrated into the psychotherapeutic process with religious patients.[17] These include the following:

1. Understanding the temporal reality of this world,
2. Focusing on the hereafter,
3. Recalling the purpose and effects of distress and afflictions,
4. Trusting and relying upon Allah (ﷻ), and
5. Focusing on the blessings of Allah (ﷻ).

These are actually components of Islamic 'aqeedah that are beneficial for the human being and provide the soul with what it is yearning for.

Other goals of psychotherapy, from an Islamic perspective, are to rejuvenate spirituality in order to cope with mental illness or stressful life events. During psychotherapy, the client may be reminded to complete the five daily prayers, read Qur'an, engage in

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=*Australian and New Zealand Journal of Psychiatry, 32*(6), pp. 867-872.

[15] Azhar et al., 1994, pp. 1-3; Azhar et al., 1995b, pp. 233-235.

[16] Hamdan, A., 2008b, Cognitive restructuring: An Islamic perspective, *Journal of Muslim Mental Health, 3*(1), p. 103.

[17] Ibid., pp. 104-108.

frequent remembrance of Allah, rely upon and supplicate to Allah. In general, these methods will promote relaxation and a general sense of well-being.[18] Further development in this area will delineate particular methods, approaches, and outcomes for religious psychotherapy with Muslims.

Ruqyah

As explained previously, ruqyah refers to Islamic methods of treatment in which various Qur'anic verses or supplications are recited in order to bring about a cure for the afflicted person. The cure, of course, comes from Allah (ﷻ). For ruqyah to be most effective, it is important to first have an accurate diagnosis because the type of verses or supplications read depends upon the particular cause of the disease. The cure for magic, for example, is different from that for envy or possession. Ruqyah can be used alone for cases of a more spiritual or supernatural nature, while it may be used in combination with medical treatments for biological causes. These processes may require an experienced religious person, and the greater the level of piety, the more effective the ruqyah is likely to be. In reality, it is best for the individuals to do the ruqyah for themselves, but this may not always be possible, depending upon the severity of the case.

Al-Krenawi and Graham note that Arab clients often make use of mental health services and traditional healing concurrently or successively. Informal traditional healing, in fact, is often used before resorting to modern mental health treatment. Family members are involved in the help-seeking process and assist the client in choosing the appropriate care. The authors suggest that traditional healing

[18] Azhar et al., 1994, pp. 1-3; Azhar et al., 1995a, pp. 165-168; Azhar et al., 1995b, pp. 233-235.

should be integrated into the helping process with clients of various cultural backgrounds.[19]

In the study of faith healers in Saudi Arabia noted above, the most frequently prescribed treatments for patients with evil eye, magic and jinn possession was ruqyah. Other commonly used methods included regular performance of prayers; exorcism, physical punishment, mock strangulation for jinn possession; inhalation, application, or drinking of herbs or herb mixtures; drinking or application of water mixed with paper on which Qur'anic verses had been written (particularly for magic).[20]

There are several supplications in the tradition of the Prophet (ﷺ) that are directly related to mental distress.

Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) said: «If anyone is afflicted by distress and grief, and says: 'O Allah, I am Your slave, son of Your slave, son of Your maidservant; my forelock is in Your Hand, Your command over me is forever executed, and Your decree over me is just. I ask You by every name belonging to You which You have named Yourself with, or revealed in Your book, or taught to any of Your creation, or You have preserved in the knowledge of the unseen with You, that You make the Qur'an the life of my heart and the light of my breast, and a departure for my sorrow and a release for my anxiety,' Allah will take away the distress and grief, and replace it with joy.» (a sound hadith recorded by Aḥmad and aṭ-Ṭabarâni)

It is narrated by Ibn Abbâs (رضي الله عنه) that the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) used to say at times of distress: «There is no god but Allah, the Almighty, the Forbearing; there is no god but Allah, Lord of the mighty throne; there is no god but Allah, Lord of the heavens, Lord

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[19] al-Krenawi, A., & Graham, J. R., 2000, Culturally sensitive social work practice with Arab clients in mental health settings, *Health & Social Work, 25*(1), p. 18.

[20] al-Habeeb, 2004.

of the earth, and Lord of the noble throne.» (recorded by Bukhari and Muslim)

Anas (ﷺ) narrated that he heard the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) supplicate: «O Allah! I seek refuge with You from distress and sorrow, from helplessness and laziness, from miserliness and cowardice, from being heavily in debt and from being overcome by men.» (recorded by Bukhari)

Unfortunately, in current times, due to weakness of faith, people have become dependent upon various forms of medical and psychological treatment to the exclusion of legislated treatments. In reality, they are being tried by these treatments, which may lead to prolonged distress. While these treatments may have some benefit and should be used when appropriate, it is a matter of tawḥeed to remember that cure ultimately comes from Allah (ﷻ), regardless of the means by which that is achieved. To say that the cure was in the medicine or in a particular doctor may be a form of shirk. Belief is very important in relation to cure, which is something often forgotten. When belief is correct and strong, the ruqyah will quickly and powerfully lead to a cure, by the grace and will of Allah.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

Attainment of Peace and Serenity

Regarding the attainment of peace and serenity, Ibn Taymiyah once wrote:

> The heart can only become sound, achieve success, take pleasure, be satisfied, experience enjoyment, become pleased, attain serenity and calmness through the *ibaadah* (worship) of its Lord, having love of Him and turning to Him (in repentance). Even if it were to attain every type of pleasure from creation, it will not acquire serenity and tranquility. This is because the heart possesses an intrinsic need for its Lord, since He is its deity, love and pursuit, and with Allah the heart achieves joy, pleasure, delight, amenity, serenity, and tranquillity.[1]

Seeking a means of nearness to Allah

The Arabic word *tawassul* means 'to draw near to what one seeks after and to approach that which one desires.' [2] It is related to

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[1] Ibn Taymiyyah, 1999, p. 121.

[2] al-Albaanee, M. N., 1995, *Tawassul — Seeking a Means of Nearness to*=

the words *al-wâsil* (the one who desires something) and *al-waseelah* (the means by which one is able to draw near to something).[3] Allah (ﷻ) mentions this concept in the Qur'an in relation to Himself:

Allah (ﷻ) says:

﴿O you who have believed, fear Allah and seek the means [of nearness] to Him and strive in His cause that you may succeed.﴾
(Qur'an 5: 35)

The scholars have explained that the means to get closer to Allah (ﷻ) are by obeying Him and performing acts that are pleasing to Him. In order for an action to be considered righteous and pleasing to Allah, it must fulfil two important conditions (as mentioned earlier):

1. The intention must be purely and sincerely for the sake of Allah; and
2. It must be in accordance with what Allah has prescribed in the Qur'an and what His Messenger has explained in his Sunnah.[4] Actions that do not fulfil these requirements are displeasing to Allah (ﷻ) and will not be accepted.

In relation to tawassul, Shaykh al-Albâni mentioned that there are three special means by which one may draw near to Allah, as prescribed in the Qur'an and Sunnah:

1. By means of the names and attributes of Allah,
2. By means of a righteous action which the supplicant has done, and
3. By means of supplication made by a righteous person.

He mentions that other forms of tawassul lack validity.[5]

=*Allah: Its Types and Its Rulings,* Birmingham, U.K: Al-Hidaayah Publishing and Distribution, p. 2.

[3] Ibid., p. 2.

[4] Ibid., p. 7.

[5] Ibid., p. 38.

Allah (ﷻ), in his infinite wisdom and mercy, has prescribed acts of worship to assist humans in drawing near to Him, in the purification of the soul and the attainment of good mental health and serenity. The path ordained by Allah is, in fact, the only true way to accomplish these goals in this life and to achieve success in the hereafter. All other methods are false and futile. Anyone who claims to have developed a more effective way to reach these goals is deluded.

Allah (ﷻ) makes this clear when He says:

﴿...This day I have perfected for you your religion and completed My favour upon you, and have approved for you Islam as your religion...﴾ *(Qur'an 5: 3)*

The Prophet (ﷺ) also said: «I have not left anything that could bring you closer to paradise without commanding you to do it, and I have not left anything that could bring you closer to hell without warning you against it.» (a reliable hadith recorded by al-Ḥaddâd and al-Ḥâkim)

Islam abrogated (or confirmed) anything that came before it and, because it was the final revealed religion, negated the possibility of any other system replacing it or improving upon it. This fact automatically repudiates any type of innovation that humans may attempt to make in the religion itself.

The Prophet (ﷺ) said: «I advise you to have taqwâ of Allah and to listen and obey, even if a slave is a leader over you. Certainly, the one who will live among you will see lots of differences. So stick to my Sunnah and the sunnah of the right-principled and rightly-guided successors. Bite onto that with your molar teeth. And avoid newly-introduced matters. Verily, every heresy is going astray.» (a reliable hadith recorded by Abu Dâwood and at-Tirmidhi)

The fact that millions of people on the earth engage in various practices, whether as acts of worship, to reduce stress or anxiety, to achieve 'the relaxation response,' or to enhance 'spirituality,' in no

way proves that these practices are the most beneficial for humanity. Certainly, they may obtain some physical, emotional or cognitive benefit, but it will be restricted to those benefits and will not go beyond them. A person who is stressed out may sit in a chair and tense and relax various muscle groups (practicing progressive muscle relaxation) and then feel a sense of relaxation or calm following it. Likewise, a person may walk in the forest, or even imagine walking in a forest, and then experience a sort of serenity. These benefits are part of the all-encompassing mercy that Allah (ﷻ) has for His creatures, whether Muslim or non-Muslim.

However, these practices are artificial and do not reach the deeper level of the soul, and they certainly do not bring one closer to Allah. In some cases, they may actually harm the soul. If a person does progressive muscle relaxation or meditates with a mantra, for example, and says that these are means of getting closer to God, those acts will not be accepted by Allah (ﷻ), and they will harm that person spiritually. If a person does circumambulation around a grave or prays to a dead person, with the hopes of getting closer to Allah, that deed will be completely rejected because it is a form of shirk. One who dies in that state risks eternal hellfire.

Regardless of their religious orientation, people may obtain some benefits from prayer, which has undoubtedly been utilized by humankind since the time of the first humans. Related to the studies on spirituality, but in a more detailed vein, researchers have discovered that prayer benefits a person in several ways. People who pray tend to experience more serenity and acceptance in their lives, and less stress and depression. Prayer has also been found to assist those who are suffering from physical illness, not only in coping with the illness, but even in curing it. Again, however, these benefits are limited if the prayer is not completed in the way ordained by Allah (ﷻ), and there may be harm if shirk is involved.

If we consider spirituality and fulfilling the needs of the soul to be our ultimate goal, the only way to achieve this is to follow the guidance of the Qur'an and Sunnah. By following the totality of this guidance in all areas of life, one can truly find complete contentment and peace. The believers should not restrict themselves to ritual acts of worship, although these are important and necessary; they should attempt to implement Islam in all aspects of their lives. If a person prays and fasts, for example, but at the same time steals from or cheats other people, there will be deficiency in his or her ability to attain serenity. One can never be 'serene' while being disobedient to Allah.

The specific Islamic methods for enhancing mental health include prayer, supplication, reading Qur'an, fasting, giving charity, pilgrimage, and repentance. It is essential to note that the main function of these acts of worship is not to bring happiness to the slave, for this is only secondary; rather, the sole purpose is to serve as acts of submission and for the praise and glorification of Allah (ﷻ).

Ritual prayer

The ritual prayer is one of the most important tools for achieving and maintaining mental health and serenity. For this reason, it has been ordained by Allah (ﷻ) that Muslims should pray five times per day. Additionally, there are supererogatory prayers that are emphasized at various times of the day and night. This constant connection with Allah (ﷻ) provides nourishment for the soul, which in turn positively impacts upon the other components of human beings, including their thoughts, feelings, and behaviours. Allah (ﷻ) says:

﴿And seek help through patience and prayer...﴾ *(Qur'an 2: 45)*

Prayer also provides protection from sin and from the effects of Satan.

﴿[Those] who believe in the unseen, establish prayer, and spend out of what We have provided for them, and who believe in what has been revealed to you [O Muhammad], and what was revealed before you, and of the hereafter they are certain. Those are upon guidance from their Lord, and it is those who are the successful.﴾

(Qur'an 2: 3-5)

﴿Recite [O Muhammad] what has been revealed to you of the book and establish prayer. Indeed, prayer prohibits immorality and wrongdoing, and the remembrance of Allah is greater. And Allah knows that which you do.﴾ *(Qur'an 29: 45)*

There are many references in the Qur'an that stress the importance of prayer. Prayer is the most essential pillar in Islam, following the testimony of faith. It is so critical that a person who rejects prayer is considered to be a disbeliever, according to the majority of scholars. Prayer is a tool that Allah (ﷻ) has given to humans as a way to deal with the numerous challenges that they may face in life.

Regarding prayer, Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyah wrote:

> Prayer will amend misdeeds, but only for he who gives it its due, offering it with complete humility and standing before Allah Most High with his heart fully turned in His direction. When such a person finishes praying, he finds a lightness in his soul, and feels that some weights have been lifted from him. He finds such vigor, rest and calm in the prayer that he wishes he had not had to end it. Prayer has become his source of gladness, his soul's delight, his heart's heaven and his place of rest from the world. Before beginning his prayer, he feels as if he were in a prison, a constricted place, and then finds rest — *in* his prayer, not *from* his prayer.[6]

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[6] al-Jawziyyah, 2000, p. 27.

Supplication

Supplications are personal prayers made at any time, in which the person supplicates to Allah for some need. Allah (ﷻ) promises that He will answer the prayers of His servants:

﴿And when My slaves ask you [O Muhammad] concerning Me, then [answer them]: I am indeed near. I respond to the invocations of the supplicant when he calls on Me. So let them respond to Me [by obedience] and believe in Me that they may be [rightly] guided.﴾
(Qur'an 2: 186)

Supplication is very beneficial for both protection and healing. For protection, the believers are advised to turn to Allah (ﷻ) and seek refuge with Him from distress, grief, worries and other negative life experiences. Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) taught the following supplication: «O Allah, I seek refuge with You from distress, grief, incapacity, laziness, miserliness, cowardice, the burden of debt and from being overpowered by men.» (recorded by Bukhari)

He (ﷺ) also used to say: «O Allah, make me adhere properly to my religion, on which all my affairs depend; make this world good for me, in which is my livelihood; make my hereafter good for me, in which is my ultimate destiny; make my life increase in every good thing, and make my death a respite from every evil.» (recorded by Muslim)

The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) used to say: «O Allah! I seek refuge with You from the fitnah of the fire and the punishment of the fire, the fitnah of the grave and the punishment of the grave, and the evil of the fitnah of wealth and the evil of the fitnah of poverty. O Allah! I seek refuge with You from the evil of the fitnah of the Antichrist. O Allah! Cleanse my heart with the snow and hail, and cleanse my heart from all sins as a white garment is cleansed from filth, and let there be a far away distance between me and my sins as You made the east and west far away from each other. O Allah! I seek

refuge with You from laziness, sins, and from being in debt.» (recorded by Muslim)

Supplicating to Allah (ﷻ) is a potent method for overcoming grief, depression, anxiety and other forms of distress. If the supplication comes from the heart, with a sincere intention, it will relieve the supplicant of worry and sadness, bringing calm and happiness in their place. The Messenger of Allah said: «If anyone is afflicted by distress and grief, and says: 'O Allah, I am Your slave, son of Your slave, son of Your maidservant; my forelock is in Your Hand, Your command over me is forever executed, and Your decree over me is just. I ask You by every name belonging to You which You have named Yourself with, or revealed in Your book, or taught to any of Your creation, or You have preserved in the knowledge of the unseen with You, that You make the Qur'an the life of my heart and the light of my breast, and a departure for my sorrow and a release for my anxiety,' Allah will take away the distress and grief, and replace it with joy.» (a sound hadith recorded by Aḥmad and aṭ-Ṭabarâni)

Reading Qur'an and other forms of remembering Allah

Allah (ﷻ) says:

﴿O humankind, there has come to you instruction from your Lord, and healing for what is in the breasts, and guidance and mercy for the believers.﴾ *(Qur'an 10: 57)*

﴿The believers are only those who, when Allah is mentioned, their hearts become fearful, and when His verses are recited to them, it increases them in faith; and upon their Lord they rely.﴾ *(Qur'an 8: 2)*

Remembering Allah and reading the Holy Qur'an have a calming effect on the body, mind and soul. This calming effect leads

to reductions in stress, worry and anxiety. Reading Qur'an has potential healing effects for various types of psychological and emotional distress. Illnesses of the heart result from either desires or doubt, and the remembrance of Allah and recitation of the Qur'an are cures for both.

Remembrance of Allah (ﷻ) is one of the most uncomplicated forms of worship, but the benefits are immense. The greatest type of remembrance is the recitation of the Qur'an, but it can take several forms, such as remembering the names of Allah and His attributes, praising Him, and thanking Him. An individual may also remember Allah (ﷻ) by remembering and talking about His blessings. Allah (ﷻ) says:

﴿Those who have believed and whose hearts are assured by the remembrance of Allah. Unquestionably, by the remembrance of Allah, hearts are assured.﴾ *(Qur'an 13: 28)*

Fasting

Allah (ﷻ) says:

﴿O you who believe! Fasting is prescribed for you as it was prescribed for those before you, that you may become righteous [develop taqwâ].﴾ *(Qur'an 2: 183)*

Having taqwâ means to be God-fearing, mindful of Allah (ﷻ) and conscious of Allah's 'presence.' It also means to be mindful of one's accountability before Allah. A person with taqwâ is not willing to disobey Allah or risk His displeasure. Those who are fasting refrain from lawful food and sexual relations with their spouses, as well as unlawful deeds and actions, for the sake of Allah. Fasting leads them to contemplate the wickedness of wrongdoing and reminds them of Allah's all-encompassing presence. This reduces the likelihood of committing sins and increases the attribute of taqwâ.

Fasting assists individuals in purifying themselves from their lower desires and impulses, such as lust, gluttony, greed and extravagance. This is mainly through control of two features of the human body: the stomach and the private parts. These are the root causes of human downfall, for they are the routes by which Satan attacks humankind. Human beings have the need to please both of these; in the process they might transgress the rights of others, violate the commandments of Allah (ﷻ), and harm themselves. If they learn to control these two, it will be easy for them to control other sources of evil.

This leads to the development of self-control and self-discipline, as well as the elimination of harmful habits and behaviours, such as smoking and overeating. It also assists the individual in controlling anger and other related feelings. A person with a full stomach is more prone to angry outbursts, because this is a door for Satan. With fasting, a person has less physical energy to become angry or to be angry with intensity.

Fasting also enhances feelings of inner peace, contentment and optimism. From the realization of Allah's pleasure and a sense of closeness to Allah, a person experiences feelings of inner peace and contentment during the period of the fast. This is directly related to the grace that Allah bestows upon His obedient slave. Through this process, a person may reduce or eliminate stress, depression, anxiety and the like.

Obligatory charity (zakât)

Zakât is a specific form of charity that is compulsory for all Muslims who have wealth beyond their needs. In general, the requirement is that 2.5% of one's wealth should be given each year to the poor and needy (and those in other categories described in the Qur'an). The focus of zakât is on the purification of material wealth

and the attainment of a spiritual, moral, and just climate, in which all individuals can live in peace and contentment.

While purifying an individual's wealth, zakât is also a means to purify the soul. The word actually comes from the same Arabic root as *tazkiyah*, which means purification (as in purification of the soul). It is for this reason that it is mentioned along with prayer in many verses of the Qur'an. Regarding prayer and zakât, it has been noted that one of the main causes of spiritual diseases in humans is the absence of hope and fear of Allah, combined with a lack of love and attachment to Him. The main cure for these diseases is prayer. Another cause of these illnesses is attachment to worldly possessions and wealth, instead of attachment to Allah. The remedy for this second cause is zakât,[7] which purifies the soul by releasing it from the grasp of stinginess, greed, and covetousness, and by increasing compassion and concern for others and gratitude to Allah for His blessings. The believers nurture within their hearts the pleasure of giving for the sake of Allah, which in turn brings them closer to Allah. This closeness brings the peace and contentment into one's existence.

Pilgrimage (*Hajj*)

The Hajj pilgrimage is a religious obligation; it must be performed at least once in a lifetime by every Muslim who is able and can afford it. It entails a visit to the house of Allah (ﷻ), the *Kaaba*, in Makkah and the performance of specific, prescribed rituals there. Allah (ﷻ) mentions in the Qur'an:

﴿And proclaim to the people the Hajj [pilgrimage]; they will come to you on foot and on every lean camel; they will come from every distant pass, that they may witness [attend] benefits for themselves...﴾

(Qur'an 22: 27-28)

[7] Zarabozo, 2002, p. 224.

In this verse, the word 'benefits' is in the indefinite form, implying that the pilgrims will receive various and numerous benefits. These may include purification of the soul, refinement of character, removal of sins, closeness to Allah (ﷻ), and so forth.[8]

Repentance

In the Islamic framework, mistakes are expected as part of the human experience; this is the mode in which we were created. For this reason, the doors of repentance are always open, and Allah (ﷻ) forgives those who repent sincerely and make an effort to avoid repeating the sin.

Allah (ﷻ) says:

﴿Say: O My servants who have transgressed against themselves [by sinning], do not despair of the mercy of Allah. Indeed, Allah forgives all sins. Indeed, it is He who is the Forgiving, the Merciful. And return [in repentance] to your Lord and submit to Him before the punishment comes upon you; then you will not be helped.﴾

(Qur'an 39: 53-54)

﴿And hasten to forgiveness from your Lord and a garden [paradise] as wide as the heavens and earth, prepared for the righteous.﴾

(Qur'an 3: 133)

﴿And those who, when they commit an immorality or wrong themselves [by transgression], remember Allah and seek forgiveness for their sins — and who can forgive sins except Allah? — and [who] do not persist in what they have done while they know.﴾

(Qur'an 3: 135)

The Prophet (ﷺ) said: «O people, turn to Allah in repentance. I repent to Allah one hundred times a day.» (recorded by Muslim)

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[8] Ibid., p. 252.

The concept of repentance is the action or process of turning away from sin and dedicating oneself to amending one's life. The Arabic word for repentance, *tawbah,* comes from the root word *tâba,* which means to return. As such, it is the act of leaving what Allah (ﷻ) prohibited and returning to what He commanded.[9] The fiṭrah, or innate human nature, at the time of birth is one of innocence and purity, in a state of submission to Allah. By sinning, people stray from the path of Allah, but by repenting, they turn away from sin and return to the original sinless state of the fiṭrah.

It has been ordained by Allah (ﷻ) that an aspect of human nature is to err or commit sin. This is a natural consequence of the free will and finite attributes that He gave us. Free will entails personal accountability for choices and is connected to reward and punishment, both in this life and in the hereafter. Allah created humans with this inclination to sin so that when He pardons those who repent, He shows us His divine attributes of mercy and forgiveness.[10] The Prophet (ﷺ) said: «By Him in Whose Hand is my life, if you were not to commit sin, Allah would have swept you out of existence, and He would have replaced you by people who would commit sin and seek forgiveness from Allah, so that He forgives them.» (recorded by Muslim)

Allah (ﷻ) in His infinite wisdom has decreed mercy for His creation. The Prophet (ﷺ) said: «When Allah created the creation, He wrote in His book (and it is placed with Him on the throne): Verily, My mercy overcomes my anger.» (recorded by Bukhari and Muslim) Part of his mercy is to forgive humans who follow their mistakes by seeking His forgiveness. The Prophet (ﷺ) said: «Allah, the exalted and glorious, stretches out His Hand during the night so that the people repent for the sins committed from dawn until dusk,

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[9] Philips, A.A.B., 1990, *Salvation through Repentance (An Islamic View),* Riyadh, Saudi Arabia: International Islamic Publishing House, p. 1.

[10] Ibid., p. 3.

and He stretches out His Hand during the day so that the people may repent for the sins committed from dusk to dawn.» (recorded by Muslim)

Allah (ﷻ) forgives sins each and every time that the servant repents sincerely — regardless of the number, severity, or repetition of sins. The key, of course, is sincere repentance. The Prophet (ﷺ) said: «A slave committed a sin and said: O Allah, forgive me. Allah (ﷻ) said: My slave committed a sin and knew that he has a Lord Who forgives and punishes for the sins. The slave again committed a sin and said: O Allah, forgive me. Allah said: My slave committed a sin and knew that he has a Lord Who forgives and punishes for the sins. The slave again did a sin and said: O Allah, forgive me. Allah said: My slave did a sin and knew that he has a Lord Who forgives sins, and punishes for the sins. Do whatever you like; I have forgiven you.» (recorded by Muslim)

Allah (ﷻ) says: «O son of Adam, as long as you call upon Me and put your hope in Me, I will forgive you for what you have done, and I shall not mind. O son of Adam, if your sins were to reach the clouds of the sky, and you were to ask me for forgiveness, I would forgive you, and I would not mind. O son of Adam, if you were to come to Me with sins nearly the size of the earth, and you were to meet Me not associating anything with Me, then I would bring you forgiveness nearly the size of (the earth).» (a sound hadith recorded by at-Tirmidhi)

The process of repentance involves the following components, which are actually conditions that must be met in order for the repentance to be valid and accepted:

1. Immediate cessation of the sin,
2. Seeking forgiveness from Allah (alone),
3. Feeling regret and distress for having sinned,
4. Determination not to return to the sin, and
5. Restitution of other people's rights (if appropriate).

No intermediary is involved in this process; the person turns to Allah (ﷻ) alone for forgiveness. The individual may also perform the prayer of repentance, which involves offering two units of prayer, followed by seeking Allah's forgiveness for the sin.

There are many supplications in the Qur'an and Hadith related to repentance, but the most excellent manner of seeking forgiveness was related by the Prophet (ﷺ) when he said: «The noblest and most excellent manner of seeking forgiveness is that the servant says: 'O Allah, You are my Lord! None has the right to be worshipped but You. You created me, and I am Your slave, and I am faithful to my covenant and my promise as much as I can be. I seek refuge with You from all the evil I have done. I acknowledge before You all the blessings You have bestowed upon me, and I confess to You all my sins. So I entreat You to forgive my sins, for nobody can forgive sins except You.'» (recorded by Bukhari)

Allah (ﷻ) says:

﴿And those who, when they commit an immorality or wrong themselves [by transgression], remember Allah and seek forgiveness for their sins — and who can forgive sins except Allah? — and [who] do not persist in what they have done while they know.﴾

(Qur'an 3: 135)

Sincere repentance cannot occur while one willingly and knowingly continues to commit the sin. Asking for forgiveness with the tongue while continuing to engage in sin is a sign of obvious insincerity. Cessation of the sin is connected to feelings of remorse, for those who are truly regretful will be less likely to repeat the act.

The Prophet (ﷺ) said: «When a believer commits a sin, a black spot appears on his heart. If he repents, desists, and asks forgiveness, his heart is polished clean. But if he does more sins, the spots increase. That is the rust which Allah mentions in His book: ﴿By no means! But rust has covered their hearts from the [sins] they do.﴾ *(Qur'an 83: 14)*» (a reliable hadith recorded by at-Tirmidhi)

Repentance is an act of worship through which the human may attain salvation and peace. The process of falling into error, realizing the mistake, and seeking Allah's forgiveness is a means for achieving spiritual growth and purification. This is accomplished through rising above the sin, controlling the desires and conquering Satan. As noted in the above hadith, for those who repent, the heart is polished clean. This is what is meant by spiritual purification of the heart and soul; and while there are many ways to achieve purification, repentance is one of the principal means. Going through the process of repentance can be very effective in reducing feelings of guilt as well as associated depressive symptoms.

Those who repent become as if they had never sinned in the first place. The Prophet (ﷺ) said: «One who repents from sin is like one without sin.» (a sound hadith recorded by Ibn Mâjah) It is as if a board has been written upon and then erased; there is no trace of what had previously been there. For those who do not repent, the heart becomes covered with rust like a board with incomprehensible scribbles.

Genuine repentance not only erases what came before it but also turns sins into good deeds. Allah (ﷻ) says:

﴿Except for those who repent, believe and do righteous work. For them Allah will replace their evil deeds with good. And ever is Allah forgiving and merciful.﴾ *(Qur'an 25: 70)*

The replacing of evil deeds with good may mean either changing negative characteristics of the individual into positive characteristics, or changing evil deeds one has committed into good deeds on the Day of Resurrection.

Repentance also develops the person's love for Allah (ﷻ), due to the realization of His mercy, forgiveness and love for His servant. Human beings become more conscious of Allah as they turn to Him in humility and devotion.[11] Ultimately, this is an expression of their

[11] Ibid., p. 4.

belief in tawḥeed, or the right of Allah to be worshipped alone without partner. By asking Allah (ﷻ) alone for forgiveness and respecting that He is the only who can forgive sins, they demonstrate the essence of Oneness in worship. This is an essential feature because true repentance must be directed to Allah (ﷻ) alone, with the realization that no one other than Allah can pardon one's sins. Repentance will not be accepted without this foundational element.

Allah (ﷻ) loves those who turn to Him and seek His forgiveness. Servants who engage in the process of repentance are fulfilling their purpose in life, which is to worship Allah. This act of worship is greatly pleasing to Allah (ﷻ), who says:

﴿...Indeed, Allah loves those who are constantly repentant and loves those who purify themselves.﴾ *(Qur'an 2: 222)*

The Prophet (ﷺ) said: «Allah is more delighted with the repentance of His servant than one of you who suddenly finds his camel, laden with supplies, after losing it in a barren land.» (recorded by Bukhari and Muslim) Relief from the feelings of guilt and shame is an indication that the repentance has been accepted by Allah (ﷻ).

Reliance upon Allah

Relying upon Allah (ﷻ) is a sign of true tawḥeed and a characteristic of the believer. In several verses of the Qur'an, Allah (ﷻ) encourages the believers to rely upon Him:

﴿...And whoever relies upon Allah — then He is sufficient for him. Indeed, Allah will accomplish his purpose. Allah has already set for everything a [decreed] extent.﴾ *(Qur'an 65: 3)*

﴿...And when you have decided, then rely upon Allah. Indeed, Allah loves those who rely [upon Him].﴾ *(Qur'an 3: 159)*

﴿...And upon Allah let the believers rely.﴾ *(Qur'an 5: 11)*

As mentioned earlier, reliance upon Allah (ﷻ) means to take the necessary actions, while at the same time trusting in Allah's mercy and compassion. According to Sharia principles, in order to fulfil belief in the oneness of Allah, the individual must take the means that Allah has created that will lead to the ends, in terms of divine decree. Neglecting the means undermines the essence of putting one's trust in Allah and contradicts the divine command and wisdom, even if the one who neglects them thinks that this is a sign of stronger trust in Allah. Neglecting them, however, is a sign of helplessness, which is not a characteristic of the believer or of this Ummah.

Contemplation and reflection

The ability to reflect, contemplate, and understand is one of the greatest blessings that Allah (ﷻ) has bestowed upon human beings. Through proper use of this ability, one should easily find the truth of Allah's oneness and uniqueness, and thus develop a keen desire to worship Him. This understanding frees human beings from the traps of Satan and engagement in mindless and useless pursuits. It inspires them to prepare for the hereafter and to focus on the important things in life, which in turn lead to inner peace, contentment, and general well-being.

Believers are encouraged to habitually contemplate death and what will happen in the grave, on the Day of Resurrection, and in the hereafter. The Prophet (ﷺ) said: «Increase your remembrance of the destroyer of pleasures: death.» (recorded by Bukhari) This type of contemplation reminds the individuals that they will not reside forever in this world, but that they will move on to another life. This type of thinking encourages them to work hard in preparation for the Day of Judgment by engaging in further good deeds and avoiding sinful behaviour.

Related to the remembrance of death is the realization of the true nature of existence in this worldly life: that life is only a transient phase, filled with various diversions and fleeting pleasures. Allah (ﷻ) says:

﴿And the worldly life is not but amusement and diversion; but the home of the hereafter is best for those who fear Allah, so will you not reason?﴾ *(Qur'an 6: 32)*

and:

﴿And present to them the example of the life of this world, [its being] like rain which We send down from the sky, and the vegetation of the earth mingles with it and [then] it becomes dry remnants, scattered by the winds. And Allah is ever, over all things, perfect in ability. Wealth and children are [but] adornment of the worldly life. But the enduring good deeds are better to your Lord for reward and better for [one's] hope.﴾ *(Qur'an 18: 45-46)*

Realizing the fleeting nature of this world leads the believers to become detached from it and to deal and cope with it in the appropriate manner.[12]

Another specific type of contemplation is reflecting upon Allah's creation in nature. This is mentioned many times in the Qur'an:

﴿Indeed, in the creation of the heavens and the earth and the alternation of the night and the day are signs for those of understanding — who remember Allah while standing or sitting or [lying] on their sides and give thought to the creation of the heavens and the earth saying: Our Lord, You did not create this aimlessly; exalted are You [above such a thing]; then protect us from the punishment of the fire.﴾ *(Qur'an 3: 190-191)*

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[12] Zarabozo, 2002, p. 338.

Through contemplation of nature, the believers draw closer to Allah (ﷻ), in awe of His strength and power to create such astonishing beauty. This increases their love and gratitude for the many bounties that they have received from Allah (ﷻ). It should also make them aware of their dependence upon the Creator for all things and reduce any tendency for arrogance.

Other methods to purify the soul and attain peace include being grateful, striving against the evil inclinations of the soul, seeking sound and beneficial knowledge, attending prayers in the mosque, having righteous companions and spouses, purifying beliefs, performing voluntary acts of worships and doing good deeds.[13] In fact, in Islam, any act that is done for the sake of Allah (ﷻ) and is within the boundaries of the Sharia will result in strengthening one's relationship with the Creator.

It is interesting to note that research has also found that those who are more religious or spiritual tend to live longer. Studies of large community samples that were followed over time have found that religious participation (attending regular worship services) increases the likelihood of living longer.[14] In a large study of 21,000 American adults followed for nine years, researchers found that attending religious services more than once a week corresponded with an increase of lifespan by an average of seven years for whites and fourteen years for African-Americans. People who never attended religious services had a fifty percent higher risk of mortality during the nine-year follow-up than those who attended most frequently. These effects were beyond what could be attributed to social, economic, health and lifestyle factors.[15] In a meta-analysis of

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[13] Farid, 1993, pp. 99-104; Zarabozo, 2002, pp. 127-389.

[14] Larson, D. B., & Larson, S. S., 2003, Spirituality's potential relevance to physical and emotional health: A brief review of quantitative research, *Journal of Psychology and Theology*, *31*(1), p. 38.

[15] Hummer, R. A., Rogers, R., Nam, C., & Ellison, C. G., 1999, Religious=

forty-two studies with a combined total of 126,000 participants, it was determined that religious involvement increased the likelihood of living longer by twenty-nine percent.[16] Although this research was mainly with non-Muslim populations, it may be that this is a worldly benefit that Allah (ﷻ) has bestowed upon them for their righteousness.

The most amazing thing of all is that this very fact is mentioned in the Holy Qur'an. In his invitation to his people to follow Allah's guidance, Prophet Noah (عليه السلام) said:

﴿O my people, indeed I am to you a clear warner [, saying]: Worship Allah, fear Him and obey me. Allah will forgive your sins and delay you for a specified term. Indeed, the time [set by] Allah, when it comes, will not be delayed, if you only knew.﴾ *(Qur'an 71: 2-4)*

The related phrase here is 'and delay you for a specified term.' In his explanation of this verse, Ibn Katheer stated that it means: "He will extend your lifespan and protect you from the torment that He would have made befall you if you did not stay away from His prohibitions." This verse is used as proof that obedience to Allah (ﷻ) and righteousness (religiosity) leads to an increase in a person's lifespan.[17]

=involvement and U.S. adult mortality, *Demography*, *36*(2), pp. 277-283; Larson & Larson, 2003, p. 38.

[16] McCullough, M. E., Hoyt, W. T., Larson, D. B., Koenig, H. G., & Thoresen, C. E., 2000, Religious involvement and mortality: A meta-Analytic review, *Health Psychology*, *19*(3), pp. 211-222; Larson & Larson, 2003, p. 38.

[17] Ibn Kathir, 2000 (Vol. 10), p. 179.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

The Benefits of Worship for Humans

The religion of Islam as a way of life provides solutions for any and all ailments, including physical, emotional, psychological and spiritual. Allah (ﷻ) created us and provided us with guidance in the form of the Qur'an and the Sunnah of the Prophet (ﷺ). Allah (ﷻ) says:

﴿Indeed, We sent down to you the book for the people in truth. So whoever is guided — it is for [the benefit of] his soul; and whoever goes astray only goes astray to its detriment. And you are not a manager [authority] over them.﴾ *(Qur'an 39: 41)*

The more we submit and worship Allah, the greater the benefits we acquire.

Support and help of Allah

One of the realms that science will be unable to assess or quantify is the domain of the unseen. How does one measure the manner and extent of Allah's love, care and assistance for His creatures? From the perspective of Islam, one of the greatest gifts for

the believing Muslim is to attain the guidance and support of the One who can take care of every need. Allah (ﷻ) mentions this aspect several times in the Qur'an:

﴿Therefore, remember Me, and I shall remember you...﴾
(Qur'an 2: 152)

﴿... if you support Allah, He will support you and plant firmly your feet.﴾ *(Qur'an 47: 7)*

﴿Indeed, We will support Our messengers and those who believe during the life of this world and on the Day when the witnesses will stand.﴾ *(Qur'an 40: 51)*

Abu Bakr (رضي الله عنه), one of the closest Companions of the Prophet (ﷺ), said: «When the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) and I were in the cave of Thawr, and I saw the feet of the polytheists who were above us at the mouth of the cave, I said: O Messenger of Allah! If one of them were to look down below his feet, he would see us. He (ﷺ) said: O Abu Bakr! What do you think of two whose third is Allah?» (recorded by Bukhari and Muslim)

In a famous hadith, the Prophet (ﷺ) told young 'Abdullâh ibn Abbâs: «Be mindful of Allah, and Allah will protect you. Be mindful of Allah, and you will find Him in front of you. If you ask, ask of Allah. If you seek help, seek help from Allah...» (a sound hadith recorded by at-Tirmidhi)

When discussing the relationship between religion/spirituality and mental health, the question often arises as to whether God intervenes in our lives. From the Islamic theology, we know that Allah (God) does intervene by responding to supplications, sending tranquillity, sending blessings, supporting us with angels and so forth. It is indicated in revelation that Allah (ﷻ) directly affects the psychological well-being of the human being, as discussed in an earlier section.

Spiritual light

Allah (ﷻ) offers us guidance, and those who submit themselves to Him will attain a light that leads them out of the darkness. This is a spiritual light that illuminates the way and imbues the receiver with contentment and tranquillity. Allah (ﷻ) says:

﴿Allah is the protector and guardian of those who believe. He brings them out from the darknesses into light...﴾ *(Qu'ran 2: 257)*

He (ﷻ) also says:

﴿So is one whose breast Allah has expanded to [accept] Islam and he is upon [guided by] a light from his Lord [like one whose heart rejects it]? Then woe to those whose hearts are hardened against the remembrance of Allah. Those are in manifest error.﴾ *(Qur'an 39: 22)*

An important aspect of this light is knowledge that allows the believer to distinguish truth from falsehood, and that which is beneficial from that which harms. Knowledge is something that is bestowed by Allah (ﷻ) upon the sincere seekers of truth. The more they seek, the more knowledge and light they are able to acquire.

This light will be of benefit for them on the Day of Resurrection, when they must go over a path that passes over the hellfire while leading to paradise. Darkness will be cast upon the believers, but they will be given light according to the level of their good deeds in this life. They will cross the bridge with a speed that matches their spiritual achievements in this life. (The disbelievers will find this path to be extremely sharp and narrow, and the hypocrites will stay behind).

﴿On the Day you see the believing men and believing women, their light proceeding before them and on their right. [It will be said]: Your good tidings today are [of] gardens beneath which rivers flow, wherein you will abide eternally. That is what is the great attainment.﴾ *(Qu'ran 57: 12)*

Al-Ashqar stated:

> Allah tells us that the believing men and women who were guided by the light of this great religion in this world, will be given light on the Day of Resurrection which will show them the way to the Gardens of Delight (Paradise) and will help them to avoid the obstacles and stumbling-blocks on that slippery path.[1]

A good life

Allah (ﷻ) also promises the believer a good, happy, and fulfilling life:

﴿Whoever does righteousness, whether male or female, while he [or she] is a believer — We will surely cause him [or her] to live a good life, and We will surely give them their reward [in the hereafter] according to the best of what they used to do.﴾ *(Qur'an 16: 97)*

This implies that they will be content and pleased with whatever Allah has decreed for them. Allah (ﷻ) will also increase their bounties in this life. Regarding the believers, Allah (ﷻ) says:

﴿That Allah may reward them [according to] the best of what they did and increase them from His bounty. And Allah gives provision to whom He wills without account [limit].﴾ *(Qur'an 24: 38)*

The increase in provisions will have an additional positive impact upon the psychological well-being of the individual.

It is interesting to note that research in the area of mental illness points to the accumulation of stressors in life as a precursor to the development of mental disorders, particularly depression and anxiety.[2] Many studies, for example, have found a correlation

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[1] al-Ashqar, U.S., 2003b, *The Day of Resurrection in the Light of the Qur'an and Sunnah,* Riyadh, Saudi Arabia: International Islamic Publishing House, p. 370.

[2] Kendler, K. S., Karkowski, L. M., & Prescott, C. A., 1999, Causal=

between the occurrence of stressful life events and the subsequent onset of major depression. These findings support the Qur'anic verse noted above. What is missing, of course, is the notion that it was Allah (ﷻ) Who removed the blessings from the individual or presented the individual with certain tests in life. This suggests that the person may have been distant from Allah (ﷻ) and was in need of such tests in order to bring him or her back to the straight path.

Allah (ﷻ) also promises to make a way for them out of every difficult situation.

﴿...And whosoever fears Allah and keeps his duty to Him, He will make a way for him to get out [from every difficulty].﴾

(Qur'an 65: 2)

So even if they face challenges and difficulties, the believers are content with the realization that Allah will eventually make a way out for them.

Allah (ﷻ) says:

﴿The believers are only those who, when Allah is mentioned, their hearts become fearful, and when His verses are recited to them, it increases them in faith; and upon their Lord they rely. The ones who establish prayer, and from what We have provided them, they spend. Those are the believers, truly. For them are degrees [of high position] with their Lord, and forgiveness and noble provision.﴾

(Qur'an 8: 2-4)

﴿And whoever obeys Allah and the Messenger — those will be with the ones upon whom Allah has bestowed favour, of the prophets, the steadfast affirmers of truth, the martyrs and the righteous. And excellent are those as companions.﴾ *(Qur'an 4: 69)*

=relationship between stressful life events and the onset of major depression, *American Journal of Psychiatry, 156*(6), pp. 837-841; Kessler, R. C., 1997, The effects of stressful life events on depression, *Annual Review of Psychology, 48.*

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

Summary and Conclusion

Human nature is complex, and Allah (ﷻ) has only granted us limited knowledge of this subject, but the knowledge that we do have from the Qur'an and Hadith is sufficient for the purposes of our existence in this life. In fact, it provides precisely what we need in order to be successful in this life and in the hereafter.

From the perspective of Islam, we are beings with a mind, body and emotions, as well as a soul that influences and directs these. The only way to truly know one's self or soul is through knowing Allah (ﷻ). This is the fundamental aspect of the psychology of humans based upon the Qur'an and Sunnah. The myriad theories available in contemporary psychology only serve to misguide and distract humans from their true purpose in life, which is the sincere worship of Allah. All other facets are secondary to this main goal. The stacks of journal articles, chapters of books, and conference proceedings containing elaborate theories and 'expert' advice will not help them on the Day of Judgment if they have neglected the basic truth revealed by Allah. Their research, in fact, points to the truth of Islam, but they are blind to this reality.

Allah (ﷻ) says:

﴿And be not like those who forgot Allah, so He made them forget themselves. Those are the defiantly disobedient.﴾ *(Qur'an 59: 19)*

The religion of Islam offers a comprehensive approach to assist an individual in purifying the soul and reaching a level of complete peace, happiness, and well-being. This level is achieved through submitting to Allah in all forms and worshiping Him in the manner prescribed in the Qur'an and the Sunnah of the Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ). Islam, in reality, is the answer for all types of ailments, whether they are spiritual, psychological, emotional, physical or social. The only thing that is needed is for human beings to follow the guidance from Allah (ﷻ), Who says:

﴿We have certainly created the human in the best of stature, then We return him to the lowest of the low, except for those who believe and do righteous deeds, for they will have a reward uninterrupted.﴾ *(Qur'an 95: 4-6)*

This verse summarizes the psychology of humans from the Islamic perspective. It is simply what life is truly about. We either elevate ourselves spiritually through our beliefs and the choices that we make, thus attaining the rewards and good pleasure of Allah (ﷻ), or we reject the guidance, debasing ourselves and thus earning the wrath of Allah (ﷻ). The path that we choose will determine not only the nature of our existence in this life, but ultimately our eternal abode in the hereafter.

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Glossary of Islamic Terms*

abu (or abi)	أبو، أبي	father (of)
ahl as-Sunnah wal-jamâ'ah	أهل السنّة والجماعة	'people of the Sunnah and the community'
âmeen	آمين	O Allah, accept our invocation; amen
angel		A being made of light who is totally obedient to Allah and has no free will; Allah has assigned some angels specific tasks, like those who record our good and bad deeds, the Angel of Death, the guardians of hell, etc.
Anṣâr	أنصار	'helpers': the Muslim citizens of Madinah who gave refuge to the Prophet (ﷺ) and the other Muslim emigrants from Makkah
'aqeedah (pl. 'aqâ'id)	عقيدة	belief system that is based upon a firm conviction in all the fundamentals of faith and of the oneness of Allah; firm creed that one's heart is fixed upon without any wavering or doubt, and that excludes any supposition, doubt or suspicion
'aql	عقل	reason, discernment, intellect

* The Arabic words are transliterated according to the conventions of the Transliteration Chart found in this book. If a word has become part of the English language (i.e., is found in a dictionary of Standard English), that spelling is used in this book and appears first in this Glossary, with the transliterated form in brackets after it.

banu (or bani)	بنو، بني	lit. 'children (of)'; usu. referring to a tribe that claims a common ancestor
eemân	إيمان	faith; belief in all the six pillars of the creed of Islam
fitnah	فتنة	lit. trial, temptation; (attempting to sow) discord between Muslims
fiṭrah	فطرة	the natural inclination (of humans) instilled by Allah
Hadith (ḥadeeth)	حديث	the collected statements and actions of Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) that with the Qur'an form the basis of Islamic law
hadith (ḥadeeth)	حديث	a statement or action of Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) that was remembered and recorded by his Companions and followers
Hajj (ḥajj)	حج	the major pilgrimage to the Sacred Mosque, site of the Ka'bah at Makkah, to be undertaken by every able Muslim once in his/her lifetime
halal (ḥalâl)	حلال	permitted according to Islamic law
ḥarâm	حرام	forbidden according to Islamic law
Iblees	إبليس	another name for Satan in Arabic
ijmâ'	إجماع	consensus: a method of deriving rulings in jurisprudence
ikti'âb	إكتئاب	depression, sorrow, grief
insân	إنسان	human being; may refer to both the body and the soul
inshallah	أن شاءاللّه	God willing
istisḥâb	إستسحاب	in jurisprudence, a proof which involves a presumption of continuity

Jibreel	جبريل	the Arabic name for Gabriel (عليه السلام), the archangel who transmitted the verses of the Qur'an and other communication from Allah to Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ)
jihad (jihâd)	جهاد	struggle or striving (in Allah's cause)
jinn (plural of jinni)	جن	non-human, rational beings created by Allah from fire, often referred to as 'demons' or 'devils'; They have free will like humans: some are Muslims, others disbelievers; some are obedient to Allah, others disobedient. Satan is a jinni. Some people try to 'foretell' the future by contacting a jinni. Some disobedient jinn mislead people into thinking that they can tell them what will happen in the future, near or far, or that the jinn can provide people with riches or some sort of power.
Kaaba (Ka'bah)	الكعبة	the House of Allah in Makkah, originally built by Prophets Ibrâheem and Ismâ'eel, and which Muslims face wherever they pray
majnoon	مجنون	insane or possessed by jinn
nafs (pl. anfus, nafoos)	نفس	human soul (spirit); self
nifâq	نفاق	hypocrisy
prophethood		The term 'prophethood' is not in the English dictionary, but is an invented term, formed along the pattern of 'childhood' and 'motherhood', as a noun reflecting a particular state of being. It is meant to translate the meaning of the

		Arabic word nubuwwah, which has no one-word equivalent in English, but which could be translated as meaning 'the state of being a prophet', and is also used to refer to 'all things that have to do with being a prophet'. The term 'prophethood' has since become common in English-language Islamic discourse. (Editor)
qadr	القدر	divine predestination; destiny; power; exact measure
qalb	قلب	heart
qiyâs	قياس	analogy: a method of deriving rulings in jurisprudence
Ramadan (Ramaḍân)	رمضان	the ninth month in the Islamic calendar; the month of obligatory fasting; the month in which the first verses of the Qur'an were revealed
riyâ'	الرياء	showing off; esp. when it is an act of worship, but done with the intention of letting people see one doing it
rooḥ	روح	spirit, soul
ruqyah	الرقية	to recite a part of the Qur'an (such as *Soorat al-Fâtiḥah*) or to supplicate to Allah using words prescribed by the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) in authentic hadiths in order to obtain relief from illness
sakeenah	سكينة	peace of mind, calm, tranquillity
Sharia (shari'ah)	شرعة	Islamic law derived from the Qur'an and the Sunnah
shaykh	شيخ	teacher, mentor; scholar

shirk	الشرك	associating partners with Allah
siḥr	سحر	magic
soorah or soorat	سورة	chapter of the Qur'an
Sunnah	سنّة	the practice and collected sayings of Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) that together with the Qur'an forms the basis of Islamic law
taqwâ	التقوى	fearful awareness of Allah; being mindful of Allah; pious dedication; being careful not to transgress the bounds set by Allah
tawassul	التوسّل	seeking to be closer (to Allah)
tawbah	توبة	repentance
tawḥeed	التوحيد	the Oneness of Allah: that He alone deserves to be worshipped and that He has no partners
tazkiyah	تزكية	purification
Ummah	أمّة	community or nation: *usu.* used to refer to the entire global community of Muslims
unseen		a term used to denote phenomena or aspects that cannot be known using ordinary human faculties
zakât (or zakâh)	زكاة	obligatory charity: an 'alms tax' on wealth payable by Muslims and to be distributed to other Muslims who qualify as recipients
Zamzam	زمزم	the blessed spring of water that Allah caused to gush out at baby Ismâ'eel's feet; located near the Ka'bah

Notes